



THE ABCS OF SCIENCE AND MORMONISM

By Mithryn

ABSTRACT

A summary of historical and scientific issues surrounding Mormonism and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with bonus content from /u/TempleAnointed... Compiled by MosiasH

Otterstrom, Paul

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ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: A is for...

"Au" or Gold. Here is the element: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold>. Note that its atomic number is 79 and it is non-corrosive, and very easy to use as a weight and measurement because it varies so little.

The plates are said to have been 7" X 8" X 6" high, and gold weighs 1206lbs per cubic foot. And all of that would be easier in metric, but I digress. Did everyone get about 200 lbs. Nice! Now, the smartass in the back will say, "But they were plates, not solid gold!" and that's fair so if we assume the plates were 50% air, that would put us at 100lbs. It is fair to say that we should expect the plates to weigh between 100 and 200lbs if pure gold.

Individuals who handled the plates all said that the plates were about 60lbs. So right away we should scream Eureka, like Archimedes and know that the whole thing was screwy. However some apologists now interject the idea that the plates were an alloy, because the Book of Mormon does not say the plates were "pure gold" only "Gold in appearance."

Here is a short list of quotes of people saying that they were pure gold:

"pure gold."

David Whitmer, Saints' Herald, February 15, 1878, 57.

God showed Joseph "where he could dig to obtain an ancient record engraven upon plates made of **pure gold** and this he is able to translate."

Dean C. Jessee, "Lucy Mack Smith's 1829 Letter to Mary Smith Pierce," BYU Studies, Fall 1982, 461.

May 15, 1999, the LDS Church News ran an article entitled "Hands-on opportunity". It said the following:

He had also been instructed by an angel, Moroni, who had met with him each year for four years. On his last visit, he was entrusted with plates of **solid gold**, which he had been translating by the power of the Spirit

But let's ignore one of the witnesses, and Smith's mother, and the church paper since we all know they could be fooled by God's tricky "Gold appearance" of the plates and turn to apologists who claim that it was tumbaga, which appears like gold and would be 66% copper and 33% gold.

Now an exercise for the reader. Get some **Tumbaga**, it's fairly cheap and place it under a 60lbs weight:

- Post a picture of what happens after one week.
- Post a picture after a month.
- Post a picture of what you estimate would happen to the Tumbaga after 1000 years of being under 60lbs of weight.

Though Tumbaga is generally stronger than pure gold, it is likely that the plates at the bottom of the stack would flatten out due to the weight of six inches worth of plates.

That's right, but at least we didn't translate the last page, I mean maybe that sealed portion was all mushed together and that's why it wasn't translated...

The title-page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from the very last leaf

And presto, you've used no anti-Mormon literature. Not a single Exmormon source, simply mathematics, science, and observation to tell that there is something wrong with the stories Joseph Smith told. His credibility, whether it was about carrying 200lbs or 60lbs while fighting to protect the plates, or about the golden content of the plates that he and his witnesses and mother discussed (Lucy never saw the plates, so her idea of "pure gold" probably came from Joseph), or about the last leaf of the Book of Mormon being the title page, something doesn't add up.

If he was willing to sprinkle tall tales into the religious history, does that not damage his credibility about the entire story? A very solid, very calculable, very demonstrable reason to doubt that there were actual gold plates of an ancient nature.

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: B is for...

Brass. Specifically, apologists and critics alike tend to focus on the mind-numbing quantity of gold in the gold plates and never really focus on the other central claim of Mormonism, that is, there were Brass plates that contained:

they did contain the five books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world, and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents; And also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah; And also the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah.

And it came to pass that my father, Lehi, also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph;

[1 Nephi 5 11-15](#)

Now this is a unique claim, that in the ancient middle east, around 600 B.C. someone was writing in brass.

ISSUE #1 the Book is a Book

The first red flag is that the Pentateuch (The five Books of Moses) [weren't written into a book, but on a scroll](#) so all the calculations on pages and weight here are assuming that an individual in ancient Jerusalem would think to write a book out of brass and not a scroll to begin with.

Indeed, a [copper scroll has been found at Qumran](#) but it is a treasure map, and does not contain scripture and is also from much later than 600 B.C. so would be an anachronism it itself.

The only instance of writing on [an alloy like brass \(in this case lead and copper\) in the ancient world turned out to be a hoax](#)

ISSUE #2 Writing on Brass

The claim has a number of issues. For example "Brass" mentioned in the bible is an anachronism

As brass seems to have been discovered in the first millennium B.C., there is a difference of more than 2500 years between the manufacture of the copper-zinc alloy, brass, and its metallic constituent, zinc [noting that the metal zinc was discovered only in the modern era]. (p. 747)

An exception [to the idea that brass in ancient Africa came from European or Arab trade] must be made for the true brass objects from Gezer of the Semitic III period (1400 - 1000 B.C.) which contain as much as 23.4% of zinc (Macalister, Gezer 1912, ii, p. 265). These isolated examples must be due either to the accidental working of a special ore or to imports from the north, as brass remains a rarity until Roman times, when Josephus could tell that the Outer Gates of the Temple were made of brass. (p. 751)

We cannot point out a Hebrew term for brass, as nechoseth just like aes or chalkos may mean brass in late texts, but usually should be translated copper or bronze. The "fine copper" mentioned in Ezra 8:27 may well be brass, which alloy was certainly used for cymbals in Hellenistic times. (p. 756)

"Technologie in de Oudheid: Zinc and Brass in Antiquity," Jaarbericht Ex. Oriente Lux, No. 8, 1942, pp. 747-757

So the brass serpent in Moses's day was most likely bronze. By 600 B.C. brass might exist, but likely not with refined zinc and it would be very precious.

Typically LDS activities [show individuals carving symbols into copper or painted tin for writing](#) however brass is quite a bit harder to push to write Pliny describes how it was done around the time of Christ (Actually a bit after) by "[First men wrote on the leaves of the palm, and the bark of certain other trees, but afterwards public documents were preserved on leaden plates or sheets and those of a private nature on wax and linen](#)". Also of note, writing on brass required stylus "tipped with diamond".

That's the method 600 years after Lehi. That means no etched brass, but rather, actual carved brass of about 624 pages worth (or over the 60lbs the Book of Mormon weighed) just for the five books of Moses!

Problem #3 Brass Tarnishes

Indeed, Lehi even references this when he says [the plates would no longer be dimmed by time](#) although given that we don't have the full words of Zenos and Zenock h one could definitely find a complaint with this prophesy.

The point is that the 1000-100 B.C. crowd used Brass as a method of writing important documents that needed to last a lifetime, not several lifetimes. Scriptures on brass would be very difficult for Alma and others to read after going over an ocean and being carried about for hundreds of years.

Issue #4 they were written in [Egyptian](#)

Which would have been Early Demotic Egyptian by 600 B.C. (Mosiah 1:4) [The Demotic script](#) was used for writing business, legal, scientific, literary and *religious documents*. It was written almost exclusively from right to left in horizontal lines and mainly in ink on papyrus. Demotic inscriptions on wood and stone are also known.

So this would be the ONLY metallic writing of Demotic script in existence, the only collection of the five books of Moses + other writings in existence at this time and the only book version of the five books of Moses at this time. In addition, it was written in Egyptian, not Hebrew. That's a ton of unique attributes for one item.

Issue #5 They Contained Isaiah

Lehi obtained the plates about 600 BC, just before the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the exile of the population to Babylon. Biblical scholars are almost all agreed that the present Book of Isaiah contains some writings by the prophet written pre-captivity (up to chapter 35 or 39), but that chapters 40 to 66 could not possibly have been written before the Babylonian Captivity, since the situation described in those chapters does not reflect pre-captivity circumstances. However, the Book of Mormon contains several whole chapters from this so-called Deutero-Isaiah, supposedly copied from the brass plates: Isaiah 48 = 1 Nephi 20
Isaiah 49 = 1 Nephi 21
Isaiah 53 = Mosiah 14
Isaiah 54 = 3 Nephi 22

Also, many individual passages from Isaiah's chapters 52 and 55 appear scattered throughout other books in the Book of Mormon.

Also why did Nephi only summarize Zenos and Zenock, but chose to copy long passages of Isaiah word for word? 1 Ne 19:23-24 the earliest such collection was the Septuagint, the Greek translation of Hebrew sacred books, made in the third century BC. <http://packham.n4m.org/brassplates.htm>

Finally the Simple Plausibility of it All

This discussion on Quora comes from someone who actually found by modern technology and assuming that Reformed Egyptian compressed the language by 70% it became "Plausible" for the Book of Mormon, but the issues with the price and thickness of Brass plates only available via modern technology apply here as well.

Maybe we could use modern methods such as chemical etching or electrolytic production:
<http://steampunkworkshop.com/electroetch-shtml/>

The results are stunning, and only anachronistic by about 1800 years to Christ, and another 600 to Lehi. So what's 2400 years of technology?

Personally, I'd love to see someone order two of these from Walmart and etch them with the 5 books of Moses written in Early Demotic Egyptian. Probably become a best seller at Deseret Book, even if the technology to make that possible only exists today.

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: C is for...

Cattle, [defined in the bible as domesticated quadrupeds](#). It's one of the basic screw ups in the Book of Mormon Apologists have been fighting since the beginning.

Indeed, in [Parley P. Pratt's autobiography he recounts being questioned about no old-world cows or oxen being in the new world until Europeans first came. He replies that the buffalo are the cows](#). Actually if one looks closely he is asked about horses, and engages in "[Mormon question dodging](#)", but I digress. So even from the year the church was founded, this anachronistic oversight has kept apologists analyzing.

First, what cattle are we talking about?

In Ether 9, which would be in or around 600 B.C. as Coriantumr is mentioned and he lives to be discovered by the Mulekites we see herded animals:

And also all manner of cattle, of oxen, and cows, and of sheep, and of swine, and of goats, and also many other kinds of animals which were useful for the food of man

Interestingly this is also where elephants, cureloms and cumoms are mentioned:

And they also had horses, and asses, and there were elephants and cureloms and cumoms; all of which were useful unto man, and more especially the elephants and cureloms and cumoms.

Which again, indicates that "Swine" is not a different idea that Joseph would have had or that the translating stone would have used a foreign name like "Curelom" instead. No, these are "Swine" like what one would imagine.

PIGS

Pigs were domesticated in China around 4900BC (although some experts claim 7000 to 6000BC in Western Asia) and were being raised in Europe by 1500BC

At Queen Isabella's insistence, Christopher Columbus took eight pigs on his voyage to Cuba in 1493. They were tough and could survive the voyage with minimal care, they supplied an emergency food source if needed, and those that escaped provided meat for hunting on return trips. But Hernando De Soto was the true "father of the American pork industry." He brought America's first 13 pigs to Tampa Bay, Fla., in 1539. As the herds grew, explorers used the pigs not only for eating as fresh meat but for salt pork and preserved pork. American Indians were reportedly so fond of the taste of pork that attacks to acquire it resulted in some of the worst assaults on the expedition.

By the time De Soto died three years later, his original herd of 13 pigs had grown to 700 – a very conservative estimate Cortés introduced hogs to New Mexico in 1600 while Sir Walter Raleigh brought sows to Jamestown colony in 1607. Semi wild pigs ravaged New York colonists' grain fields to the extent that every pig 14 inches in height that was owned by a colonist was required to have a ring in its nose to make it easier to control. On Manhattan Island, a long solid wall to exclude rampaging pigs was constructed on the northern edge of the colony; it created the name for the area now known as Wall Street. By 1660 the pig population of Pennsylvania Colony numbered in the thousands. By the end of the 1600s, the typical farmer owned four or five pigs, supplying salt pork, ham, and bacon for his table; <http://www.austinchronicle.com/food/2009-04-10/764573/>

So as you might have noticed we have no lack of evidence of when pigs arrived. What do apologists say? [John L. Sorensen](#) says:

A good example of the confusion is with the coatimundi (*Nasua narica*). Landa, the padre who favored us with a detailed description of Yucatan, wrote of the beast, "There is an animal which they call chic, wonderfully active, and as large as a small dog, with a snout like a sucking pig."

It should be noted that Sorensen notes in his work that it is not his purpose to test the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon or to put it "on trial" in "some make-believe scientific dock" (1985, xvii). So there is no science. Nor could I find anything about this "Chic", but note that Sorensen does not say it is a pig. Just a beast with a snout. Could be a Cuileom for all we know as "Swine" should register an image that matches what Joseph would expect.

Enter Wade E. Miller and Matthew Roper

Presently two distinct species of [peccary](#) live in Mesoamerica. These include the Collared Peccary (*Pecari tajacu*) and the White-lipped Peccary (*Tayassu pecari*), both of which can be found in the tropical regions near the Tuxtlas Mountains of the Yucatan... Remains of these animals have been found associated with man for several thousands of years. http://en.fairmormonevidence.org/Category:Book_of_Mormon/Animals/Swine

Well now, this is exciting isn't it? So when were the Peccary domesticated so as to be called cattle? "Peccaries are aggressive enough in temperament that, unlike some pig species, they cannot be domesticated as they are likely to injure humans." <http://www.kaieteurnewsonline.com/2011/06/05/the-peccary-pecari-maximus/>

::Sad trombone::

Too bad, this was all that the best and the brightest of the Apologists could slap together. Pig-like things that could not count as cattle; but are found in the Olmec region; and an animal called a "chic" that one can only find out more about if one buys the book, pity Mr. Sorensen didn't include the Latin name that would make looking it up easy.

Sheep

In the 1400's, Queen Isabella of Spain used money derived from the wool industry to finance Columbus and other conquistadors' voyages. In 1493 on his second voyage to the New World, Columbus took sheep with him as a "walking food supply." He left some sheep in Cuba and Santo Domingo.

In 1519, Cortez began his exploration of Mexico and the Western United States. He took with him sheep that were offspring of Columbus' sheep. These sheep are believed to be the descendants of what are now called "Churros." The Navajo Churro is the oldest breed of sheep in the U.S. Despite efforts by the U.S. government to eradicate the breed, Navajo Churros are still raised by Navajo Indians.

<http://www.sheep101.info/history.html>

Apologist response [Ovis canadensis](#) (Big horn Sheep) were native however *Ovis canadensis* has never been domesticated. And the reason appears to be genetic differences although the sample only included one *Ovis*

Canadensis; but the Genes were similar among all non-domestic sheep. Indeed, this gene difference seems to result in a [lack of "Submissive posture"](#) which is key to domestication both in sheep and dogs.

Which means that the apologist response is an animal that could never be considered "Cattle" but would always be ["Wild beasts"](#) for hunting

Oxen

The most common bovine (ox/cow) found in the New World is the bison (mistakenly called "buffalo" by most Americans). In light of the evidence for late survival of the bison as far south as Nicaragua into recent historical times, there is no reason to doubt the late and limited survival of some of the species down to the sixth century B.C. Bison were still present in northern Mexico into the eighteenth century and were still present in Michoacán, Mexico, until a few centuries before the Conquest.

We're again forced to be picky about that term "Cattle" as domesticated animals. [Buffalo were not domesticated](#)

Summary of the above

For all of the above it's quite clear that the Nephites could not drive them with them; as that is a feature of domesticated livestock, as per the verse in 4 Nephi 1:33:

And now it came to pass that the people of the Nephites did all return to their own lands in the twenty and sixth year, every man, with his family, his flocks and his herds, his horses and his cattle, and all things whatsoever did belong unto them.

Or gather the animals together when faced with robbers as per 3 Nephi 4:4

Nephites being in one body, and having so great a number, and having reserved for themselves provisions, and horses and **cattle*, and flocks of every kind, that they might subsist for the space of seven years

Or in Enos 1:21.

Domestication of animals is non-trivial. Simply saying animals existed that semi-match the description is not what is claimed in the text, but rather, domesticated animals that can be driven and maintained in captivity is essential. None of the apologist responses comes close to dealing with the issue as needed for a match relative to "Cattle".

This was one of the earliest Exmormon and non-Mormon discussion topics about the Book of Mormon, needing to be defended as early as 1831, and it still goes without any satisfactory answer to this day.

C is also for Chariots

We should also touch on the topic of Horses and Chariots, both mentioned liberally in the Book of Mormon and typically accompanying the cattle arguments in early Mormon debate (Parley P. Pratt simply doesn't address them at all)

The most famous use of "Chariot" is when Ammon is with King Lamoni (tending his domesticated sheep which are scattered by Lamanites!).

Alma 18-20

Now when Lamoni had heard this he caused that his servants should **make ready his horses and his chariots**.

12 And it came to pass that when Ammon had made ready **the horses and the chariots** for the king and his servants...

9: Behold, he is **feeding thy horses**. Now the king had commanded his servants, previous to the time of the watering of their flocks, that they should **prepare his horses and chariots, and conduct him forth** to the land of Nephi;

By this we learn the following: Horses and Chariots are connected logically. The Horses and Chariots were for conducting travel. The Horses needed to eat and were fed (No automobiles, no matter how tempting it might be for an apologist to ignore a few thousand years).

The problem

Horses were not in the new world during the time of the Book of Mormon

"It is well known that domesticated horses were introduced into North America beginning with the Spanish conquest, and that escaped horses subsequently spread throughout the American Great Plains."

Further, the wheel (or [more appropriately the wheel and axel needed for a "chariot"](#) was an [invention that did not exist in the Western Hemisphere](#) until the conquest of Spain.

This one-two punch knocked out a lot of would-be converts from Mormonism's foundation and is still an issue that plagues apologists

Apologist response

Regardless of the reason for the presence of "horse" and "chariot" in the text, we must still deal with the question of what the original text might have meant the animal and conveyance that Joseph translated as "horse" and "chariot" to be. From this point on, all is speculation—but speculation consistent with the Mesoamerican world.

All they have is speculation based on actual data in the new world. They make the data fit their hypothesis, instead of rejecting the hypothesis when the data didn't fit. This is not science or logic, but rather, belief and pseudo-science.

Thus, Maya art represents the king riding on a litter.

And yet, [Joseph would have been familiar with "litters"](#) as they were *in use* during Joseph's lifetime. There is no good reason to use the word "Chariot" when meaning a "litter". And although the Liahona published that over 100 examples of [wheeled artifacts in Mesoamerica in December 1988](#) the article sadly does not cite a source. Yet today, two and a half decades later, [Wikipedia still claims the Mesoamericans did not know the wheel](#) If only those apologists would cite sources, maybe they could update Wikipedia and correct the world's knowledge.

Tapirs

Some apologists have suggested Tapirs [might have been used to pull non-wheeled sleds](#) or [evolved into horses \(that all died out with no bone traces\)](#) However even FAIRMormon seems to have backed off of this [ridiculous and quickly disproved claim](#) that anyone would want tapir's to pull a sled. Deer suffer from the same lack of being able to be domesticated.

There you have it, anachronisms and issues that started almost with the first printing of the book that plague the apologist today. The basics of science applied to the book's claims, with no anti-Mormon sources required.

QED.

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: D is for...

[Devil](#). And [who does that remind us of?](#) The Devil in Mormonism is a fascinating character. I think someone should do a dissertation some day on him (or [her if you watch Mr. Deity](#)). Regardless the Devil is a powerful character in Mormonism. He is very real. In [1 Nephi](#), he leads a church over all the earth. In [Jacob](#) the Devil's primary role is "Deceiver". In [Mosiah](#), mankind's natural state is to be devilish and one will be separated from God just because one is born without intervention. In [Alma](#), one gives one's self over to the devil who is [an enemy to all righteousness](#). 3rd Nephi quotes the New Testament that even those who perform miracles (actual miracles here) casting out devils can be sent away from God at the last day, and gives warnings that devils can get one at any time.

In [Moroni](#) we learn that everything bad comes from the devil and he tries continually to get people to do evil and nothing good ever comes from him.

Wow, that's a scary character. And powerful. When we add on the concept that 1/3 the host of heaven followed him and seek all men to be miserable like the devils are (and we have 6 billion people on earth now, meaning there are at least 2 billion devils but probably closer to **6 billion** if we take 1/3 the number of people who ever lived or **more** considering that ALL devils were sent to this earth for all worlds it means that the spirit equivalence of earth must be jam-packed with devils everywhere just writhing with devils around every man, woman and child.

What a scary world that paints!

But then we even add to that, that the [Devil can appear as an angel of light](#) and that one can only tell [a true messenger by shaking hands](#). Wow that's a lot to take in.

Why, even the temple endowment focuses more on Satan. The church has had to ask individuals performing the role of Satan in the temple live action to not be too dramatic. Satan is by far the most alive character in the endowment, being almost the only one to have emotion or facial expression. He is also the only character to break the 4th wall and recognize he is in a play (Making me think he is actually [Deadpool](#)) What then could remove power from such a creature? What could protect the servants of God or the common man from such horrors? Well, the church would answer Priesthood, but since that's not terribly verifiable, and only useful to say a tiny-portion of the world's population [let's try something else](#).

You see, [Mormon apostles have told us things connected with Satan](#) "The mischief of devil worship, sorcery, witchcraft, voodooism, casting spells, black magic, and all other forms of demonism should always be avoided." And since Seer stones and dousing rods and such can fall on both sides of the isle as "Good" and "evil" we need a foolproof method for detecting the Devil.

Enter [James Randi](#). James Randi, also known as the "Amazing Randi", founded [a million dollar challenge where anyone who could reproduce evidence of paranormal, divine or even demonic activity, they could win a million dollars](#). The trick was, that all superpowers claimed had to be set up under scientifically rigorous conditions. The person could proclaim their powers and even suggest how to test them, but scientific rigor had to be added.

No one was ever able to claim the million dollars. Devils, gods, alien contacts all failed under scientific observation.

Which means, in brief, that the most surefire way to protect the youth of the latter-days is not to surround them with priesthood and ban masturbation, but to observe them scientifically. Yes the billions of devils existing just to make men miserable and lead men away from God and do nothing good, no nothing; those devils so foolish or forced that they MUST shake a hand if offered even if they are appearing as angels of light, are completely powerless once scientific rigor is applied.

Indeed, I have to wonder why the Astronauts didn't report back an immediately noticeable difference in temptation once they left Earth's gravity as the Devil and his angels are restricted to this world.

In fact, the very [first astronaut may have said with no temptation: "I looked and looked and looked but I didn't see God."](#)

As such I would highly recommend that whenever a Mormon feels the temptations of Satan, or evils influence, they should immediately set up a control group, and someone observing the proceedings as that seems to completely nullify Satan's abilities.

Why [Ouija boards](#), [Séances](#), and [witchcraft](#) (things Apostles identify as tools of the devil) all fail under science.

So perhaps one cannot live up to every covenant made in a temple on a particular day and avoid Deadpool's influence as long as one is scientifically tested regularly.

Warning: Some of the issues with "the devil" in Mormonism touch on debunking modern Christianity as a whole. C.S. Lewis should not read beyond this point

C.S. Lewis gave us a fascinating view of how devils think in the Screwtape Letters. A book that is the epitome of straw man arguments, we see how devils lure humans with mixing [Christianity with politics](#) or tempting the Christian with being [overly missionary-minded](#) to drive people away.

However, even C.S. Lewis' ideals of what a devil is like and how they tempt was shaped by the New Testament's concept of devil which is inherently flawed.

The best research says that [Mark was the first Gospel chronologically written](#) which means that early [Christians were taught about casting out of devils as one of the very first miracles \(in the first chapter of Mark\)](#) before just about any other concept outside of baptism and Jesus being a messenger. The gospel of Mark is replete with devil encounters. The apostles cast out devils, it is given as a sign of those who are true believers, the disbelievers accuse Jesus of being from "Beelzebub" and casting out devils by the devils, He casts devils into Pigs, He casts devils out of a girl remotely, the disciples get after another guy for casting out devils, and it is mentioned that Mary Magdalen had 7 devils.

Excuse me sir, but I'm afraid you have the wrong devil

That's a very devil-dealing religion right there. But the problem is that [the devil was known by the early Jews not as an evil force, but rather as one of God's angels who worked with God to tempt the righteous and prove them for heaven](#).

Hence you have the story of Job where Satan walks into heaven like Loki swingin' into Asgard to talk to Thor, and God suggests who Satan should tempt next.

The name for Satan in this case is a noun from a verb meaning primarily "to obstruct, oppose", Ha-Satan is traditionally translated as "the accuser" or "the adversary" and is a title. Hence the angel who visited Joseph

with a sword and told him to practice polygamy could be called "Satan" correctly because he was an opposer to Joseph, or an Adversary sent to test him.

In Judaism, Satan is a term used since its earliest biblical contexts to refer to a human opponent.[23] Occasionally, the term has been used to suggest evil influence opposing human beings, as in the Jewish exegesis of the Yetzer hara ("evil inclination" Genesis 6:5). Micaiah's "lying spirit" in 1 Kings 22:22 is sometimes related. Thus, Satan is personified as a character in three different places of the Tenakh, serving as an accuser (Zechariah 3:1–2), a seducer (1 Chronicles 21:1), or as a heavenly persecutor who is "among the sons of God" (Job 2:1). In any case, Satan is always subordinate to the power of God, having a role in the divine plan. Satan is rarely mentioned in Tannaitic literature, but is found in Babylonian aggadah. Berlin, editor in chief, Adele (2011). (The Oxford dictionary of the Jewish religion (2nd ed. ed.). New York: Oxford University Press. p. 651. ISBN 0199730040.)

So you see, the concept of "Devil" or "Satan" has evolved over time, and by the time the New Testament came about we had a very different Devil. Again, by the time Joseph Smith is on the scene and the burned-over district was filled with preachers who taught of fire and brimstone for anyone who sinned at all, the devil is a very different character again.

Now either Satan can still level-up and after each successful soul he still gains XP (except for lawyers, I bet he's levelled up to where they don't even register at all), or we're dealing with an anthropomorphic concept rather than an actual being.

As such, one can pretty handily take any of the stories of Mormonism and see how they fall apart with the actual concept of Satan as originally conceived:

- [Korihor, the anti-Christ, being misled of an angel saying there is no God is so confusing as to make no sense whatsoever](#)
- Joseph [saying that Michael dismissed the devil on the banks of the Susquehanna](#)
- The Kirtland Temple dedication with the Devil throwing people about
- [Sidney Rigdon being tossed about by a Devil so that he was injured for five weeks](#)
- [The first vision "darkness that tried to destroy Joseph" and the whole concept that the Devil is upset about the gospel and fights the missionaries](#)
- The Michael Ballam Satan in the temple video who has his "Powers and Priesthoods" removed for tempting Eve
- Satan leading away 1/3 the host of heaven in the pre-mortal war

Indeed, the whole tale of Mormonism depends on a great evil being conspiring to destroy mankind. The very definition of Satan and view of the meaning of the word disproves Mormonism's very foundations. The religion very clearly is the product of the evolved concept of "The devil" in the 1800's.

And the worst part of it, Bruce R. McConkie knew and didn't tell you. Oh yes, in the bible dictionary we can read

[The English word Devil in the KJV is used to represent several different words in Greek \(slanderer, demon, and adversary\) and Hebrew \(spoiler\)](#)

Yup, right there, he knew that it didn't mean "Demon" or "Slanderer" in Hebrew, but rather spoiler. And we see that he moved "Adversary (Ha-Satan)" from the Hebrew side to the Greek.

So Mr. McConkie had looked up the meanings and with them (unless a very peculiar dictionary or very limited encyclopedia) would have come the concepts I've talked about. However, he then skips those definitions and gives only LDS-related ones

But maybe, maybe Old McConkie didn't know that the Devil as a concept was flawed. But then he adds:

Latter-day revelation confirms the biblical teaching that the devil is a reality and that he does strive to lead men and women from the work of God.

Ah, so he knew it was in question. He didn't state "Scriptures testify that the Devil is a reality" No, he mingles LDS scriptures with biblical ones that clearly state a different concept; and then says that it is by "Latter-day revelation" that tells us we have the right concept. [Very circular, that logic is.](#)

TL;DR: Even the devil (as a concept) testifies that the LDS church is not true. It is a very basic underpinning that can be proved away with science, or a basic grasp of the Hebrew language and some willingness to study.

It is clear that LDS sriptorians are aware of this issue and do not address nor teach it, but rather hide it from members through deceptive techniques

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: E is for...

Etymology. The history of words, their origins, and how their form and meaning have changed over time. By extension, the term "the etymology of [a word]" means the origin of the particular word. The word etymology is derived from the Greek word ἐτυμολογία, etymologia, itself from ἔτυμον, etymon, meaning "true sense" and the suffix -logia, denoting "the study of."

That is to say, we study the "true sense" of the word. Now right off the bat someone is going to criticize me for calling this "Science". No, we don't set up a control group, and then iterate based on a hypothesis when studying word origins. However, we can test the Mormon fundamental claims as a hypothesis and use etymology to say if we accept or reject that hypothesis. One might state this as the probability of finding a similar word in two separate cultures that means the same thing.

A bit more on how Etymology works:

For languages with a long written history, etymologists make use of texts in these languages and texts about the languages to gather knowledge about how words were used during earlier periods of their history and when they entered the languages in question. Etymologists also apply the methods of comparative linguistics to reconstruct information about languages that are too old for any direct information to be available.

By analyzing related languages with a technique known as the comparative method, linguists can make inferences about their shared parent language and its vocabulary. In this way, word roots have been found that can be traced all the way back to the origin of, for instance, the Indo-European language family.

For Example

When we study the word "Cup" we can tell that it is related to the word "Kopf" in German for "head" both having split off from the same root

Think of it like Genealogy for words. And yes, some words are very hard to tell their exact origin, but I will attempt to show that the Book of Mormon and other documents miss the target so completely that we can handily reject the null hypothesis.

The Hypothesis

That words used by Mormon, Moroni and others developed from Egyptian, Hebrew or other Semitic sources available by 600 B.C. in Jerusalem. Or would be used correctly in 1800's New England English.

That's right, we're throwing the apologists a bone and saying that the words could be due to "loan shifting" The easiest thing to test on is names, as they don't have a lot of word-shift to them. A person's name is a name, although names do have a meaning, we see that names are not translated because "Mormon" which is defined as "more Good" is not said "More Good" but as Mormon.

Assumption: God is consistent and doesn't alter how things are done constantly when it comes to translation methodology. I.e. Mormon could be translated said "more good" as a name in one book, and not in another. I think we see that names consistently remain names and not their translations throughout the book.

Please note that Joseph Smith said:

There was no Greek or Latin upon the plates from which I, through the grace of the Lord, translated the Book of Mormon.
(Times and Seasons, vol.4, no. 13 (May 15, 1843) p. 194.)

Section 1 Words that do not exist in Egyptian/Hebrew in 600 B.C. or prior

"Timothy" - From the Greek name Τιμοθεος (Timotheos) meaning "honoring God", derived from τιμαω (timao) "to honor" and θεος (theos) "god". It is the name of one of the disciples in [3rd Nephi](#)

"Alpha and Omega" - [These are Greek characters at the beginning and end of the Greek alphabet](#). It would be a metaphor like saying "I am the A and the Z, the beginning and the end". As recorded in the scriptures, this makes little sense for Christ to say to Nephites. They wouldn't know what an "Alpha" was or an "Omega", nor why that would be the beginning or the end. We should expect that Christ, being understanding, all knowing god that he is, that he would use the first and last [characters of Mayan](#) or whatever the common language(s) of the people at the temple spoke.

"Christ" - is the English transliteration of the Greek word Χριστός (transliterated precisely as Christós); it is relatively synonymous with the Hebrew word rendered "Messiah" (Hebrew: מָשִׁיחַ, Modern Mashiah, Tiberian Māšîăḥ). Both words have the meaning of "anointed," and are used in the Bible to refer to "the Anointed One".[108] In Greek translations of the Old Testament (including the Septuagint), the word "Christ" is used for the Hebrew "Messiah", and in Hebrew translations of the New Testament, the word "Messiah" is used for the Greek "Christ".[109] If you take any passage in the Bible that uses the word "Christ", you can substitute for it the word "Messiah" or "the Messiah" with no change in meaning (e.g. Matthew 1:1, 16, 18).

The Book of Mormon uses both terms throughout the book. In the vast majority of cases, it uses the terms in an identical manner as the Bible, where it does not matter which word is used. The Book of Mormon occasionally uses the word "Christ" in a way that is not interchangeable with "Messiah". For example in 2 Nephi 10:3, the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob says an angel informed him that the name of the Messiah would be Christ

"Synagogue" and "Church". A Synagogue is not just a vague term to mean any building, like "Church" is. The Book of Mormon uses both. The oldest known [Synagogue is from 150 B.C.](#) Making this word a non-sense word. Now we could argue "loan-shifting" but why then wouldn't it just use the word ["Church"](#) or ["Place of worship"](#)?

But the word "Church" suffers from the same problem. "Congregation" was the actual word used in the Septuagint and the word "Church" would not be contemporary to when [Nephi uses it in conjunction with Laban](#)

"Adieu" - a French word which means [goodbye forever](#), this one could be a loan-shift, except that the usage is, in fact, saying the author will see the reader again at the judgment bar of God which would be the French word [Au revoir](#). Although the literal meaning of Adieu is "I commend you to God" so this one might work with the loan-shift concept [especially since it was so popular in the 1800-1830's](#).

Apologist [Brian D. Stubbs has stated that though the language of the Mulekites isn't put forward in the Book of Mormon, it could have consisted of Phoenician, Greek, or Arabic] (Stubbs, Brian D (Spring 1996), "Looking Over vs. Overlooking Native American Languages: Let's Void the Void", Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 5 (1): 1–49, retrieved 2007-03-02) however, this is "God of the Gaps" thinking. It is incumbent on Mr. Stubbs to actually prove this supposition.

"Antipas", "Archeantus", "Esrom", "Ezias", "Judea", and "Zenos" are [Hellenizations of Greek names](#). We could calculate the probability of one name or two names showing up this way as being very very unlikely. To have this many names, words, and similarities to Greek, I think we can positively conclude that the author(s) of the Book of Mormon somehow had access to Greek as a source.

Section 2 Words that could be loan shifted, but just happen to be used a lot in the 1800's, but have an odd use in the Book of Mormon

- [Curious Workmanship](#) was common in the 1800's. It's like finding the phrase "High Tech" in a document claiming to be from the 1850's.
- [Abomination](#)
- [And it came to pass](#)
- [Secret Combinations](#)
- [Stripling](#)

As we can see, the Book of Mormon uses phrases commonly in use in or right around the 1800's with key identifiable phrases falling in the 1820's One has to wonder what the actual Nephite phrases were that were loan-shifted to such idiom as "secret combinations" and "curious workmanship" since these phrases were 1800's idiom.

Words that should appear because of their pattern of usage in Hebrew, Egyptian, etc., but don't Hebrew

- Shalom. Not mentioned once, uber-common in Hebrew
- Kakha kakha - Good. Might be worth a mention since Mormon means "More good"
- Boker / erev / layla Morning/evening/night

Egyptian

- Any mention of Osiris or any Egyptian God.
- sš sš-s(sh) '(sesh)' - An Alabaster Basin hieroglyph meaning "Festival" i.e. "After the Sesh"
- tp - Archaic Dagger - Top or best
- This is just a sample of how different the languages are and what one might expect rather than words like "Synagogue"

Words that were actually used in Native America that should at least appear in the Book of Mormon

[Archaeological evidence has been found for five or six different Mesoamerican scripts, but archaeological dating methods make it difficult to establish which was earliest](#) Hence the forebear from which the others developed and a significant portion of the documented scripts have not been deciphered. None of the documented Mesoamerican language scripts have any known relation to Hebrew or Egyptian.

Further, B.H. Roberts did a study on Native American Languages based on the idea that the Book of Mormon shows people all able to converse with one another. His findings were not supportive of the text:

1. That there are a large number of separate language stocks in America that show very little relationship to each other

2. That it would take a long time—much longer than that recognized as "historic times"—to develop these dialects and stocks where the development is conceived of as arising from a common source of origin—some primitive language
3. That there is no connection between the American languages and the language of any people of the Old World. New World languages appear to be indigenous to the New World
4. That the time limits named in the Book of Mormon—which represents the people of America as speaking and writing one language down to as late a period as 400 A.D.—is not sufficient to allow for these divergences into the American language stocks and their dialects. (Roberts, B. H. Studies of the Book of Mormon. Signature Books, Inc. Salt Lake City. 2nd Edition. 1992. pp. 91–92)

That is to say, that there is no indication a single language or set of languages that would support cross-communication as shown in the Book of Mormon

Common names in Mesoamerica that can be compared to what names appear in the Book of Mormon

- Lamanai - A temple places at first seems to be a hit, however the city predates the Nephite arrival
- Xunantunich
- Teotihuacan
- Am Ixel
- Palenque
- Chote (also Echota)
- Yaxchilan

Conclusion

Hopefully, this shows that the names we should expect to find in a Mesoamerican text, and the Greek/Latin names we find is sufficient to reject the Null Hypothesis.

Apologist response

Here is a list of [116 "Jaredite names in use today"](#)

Please note how few are actual "names" but are parts of corn, or a verb that they still call a "hit" for matching with a name as opposed to the clear Hellenization of some names as discussed above.

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: F is for...

Fighting, specifically troop movements, fighting styles, and issues with combat.

Now there is a lot here that falls outside the realm of "Science" too, but there are some things that are clearly out of place and that we can put hard numbers to in order to flag issues. Whether it's [martial arts from china in 1700's France](#) or [weapons that are impractical and anachronistic](#) we love our movies and we have accustomed ourselves to believe any amount of [impractical armor](#).

Sword of Laban

A sword with a [pure golden](#) hilt is impractical for combat. Gold is too soft, the tang of the sword would pop out after the [first few sword clashes](#). [An Apologist attempted a recreation and ended up concluding that Nephi's used wooden swords as a golden-hilted sword would be useless](#).

Nevertheless the text says that not only did Nephi use the [sword in defense of his people](#) but that it was used all the way to [King Benjamin](#). Further, the sword was supposedly not rusted despite being in a stone box in upper [New York for 1,500 years which is magic-level preservation](#).

But still it [appeared bright, even after all those years \(even if it was a vision, although Brigham does not say as much\)](#) with [magic writing on it](#).

Ammon's Ginsu 2000 arm-chopper

Ammon's story includes the Chariot's and horses we've [discussed previously](#) but he also uses a sword to protect the king's sheep with amazing results.

First of all he displays [hobbit like stone-throwing abilities](#) by killing six [Lamanites with a sling](#). The real story starts when he, for some reason, [removes the arms of several of them](#) but the text curiously says that he only killed the leader. This is odd, because [severing an arm impacts an artery](#) which means they would bleed out in about 15 seconds. But maybe it was just the fore-arm (loose translation), there is still the radial artery so the Lamanites must have understood tourniquet and cauterization of wounds if these people didn't die.

For example in the early middle ages:

Foreign matter was a big deal in those times as infections killed the majority of the wounded. Some ancient Celt and Greek units fought naked or mostly naked as it was felt that bits of cloth embedded in a wound were actually more dangerous than the enemies weapons themselves.

Animal urine was a common attempt to reduce infection rates at times and in some places. So too was sealing the wound with a brand thus cauterizing the wound and reducing external chances of infection.

In the early days mostly there were attempts to staunch the wounds. If the injured took a crushing hit to the skull they might have drilled a hole in the skull to relieve pressure on the brain. Salves of various effectiveness would be applied to fight infections. Pain killers in the form of teas, booze and even opium in some areas would be given to the wounded to ease suffering. Then they waited. If an organ was pierced it was a slow agonizing death usually and invariably fatal. If too much blood was

lost it was fatal. Infections were often fatal. Sometimes men would recover mostly from grievous wounds only to die of a hospital infection before they could get out away from the rest of the wounded. Bleeding was used at times and sometimes caused enough damage to kill a man who might otherwise have survived. Experimental medicine was common as most wounded were going to die anyway so any experimental chance was better than none. ([Source, please note links to other sources](#))

I haven't found much in the way of severed limb treatment in Mesoamerican cultures, but apparently apologists believe that [Aztec limb removal](#) is evidence of Ammon, despite the Aztecs having nothing to do with the Book of Mormon at all; nor do they also include [Mayan Penis Bloodletting](#) for priests (The Mayans are supposed to be Nephites as they have a written language, about the only match in all of Mesoamerica), I wonder why? Seems like one would want to emulate the entirety of the Nephite culture if it was actually connected. I digress, the Aztec cut off limbs; but it was a token of defeating the opposite side. They also did human sacrifice. Very little discussion of preservation of the individual.

Whatever the martial arts prowess of Ammon was (maybe he was like the Karate Kid, and only had [one really good move](#), but by doing it over and over again; I don't think we can say the arm-less Lamanites all lived. It seems to defy how medicine and life worked back then.

Moroni's Armor

Technologically-driven martial superiority almost always leads to invasion throughout history. Which makes Moroni's claim that the war was purely defensive suspect. If written in a textbook, this claim would need to be heavily sourced to be accepted, especially, as we learn, that there are King-men working with the opposition within the Nephite government, the one-sidedness presented should be viewed with a very skeptical eye.

Imagine that we learn that Sevastopol has been "taken" by a foreign power, say "Ukraine" and that the government of Russia has sent troops to "take it back" because it is a "Russian-speaking" location. Not many people around the world believe that Russia's motives are 100% just. But that's the same setup we are given for the Moroni-wars. "We have superior technology and weaponry and we are only taking back our own territories".

But more about his armor: It had [breastplates](#) head plates and covered loins. Elsewhere [shields](#) are mentioned. Another note is that it has [arm shields](#) which could mean either [bracers](#) which would make sense if they used bows, except they are [mostly a concept of Hollywood](#) to make people seem old-timey, or [bucklers](#) which would be anachronistic by about 1000 years or similar to driving a Nissan Leaf against William Wallace). Brass bracers were contemporary with Nephi, however; but would hardly be a technological development and would be something Laman and Lemuel would be equally familiar with.

[Apologists have tried to find anything remotely close to this](#) but the thing is, the armor is all anachronistic. The Quilted Armor shown is about 3-400 years after Moroni, the breastplate and shield are also from the same time period. That's like having Kevlar at the Battle of Waterloo on the level of anachronism.

Further, the armor mentioned matches roman style armor mentioned in the [New Testament](#). Which is perhaps why so many [LDS artists](#) draw [Nephites](#) with [Roman-style armor](#)

So what was Mayan armor before 0 A.D.?

Helmets were not common, and most armor was simply tight-woven cotton, with shields made of animal skin, reed matting, or carved wood. <http://ancientstandard.com/2007/03/22/the-mayan-military-ca-300-900-ad/>

This is in A.D. 300, or about the same time Moroni is supposed to be dying. Similar armor and styles are in the surrounding Mesoamerica as anyone with significantly better armor or weapons would have taken them down.

What is missing?

Armies had an elaborate signaling system using whistles and drums. Think if the Book of Mormon had mentioned something like this.

Indeed, much of the Mayan system of warfare was based on the element of intimidation and surprise – the war chieftains are known from wall paintings to have dressed in elaborate animal-inspired robes and headdresses; painting one's body with religious insignia was also common before battle.

I'm sure that someone will mention the Amlicites marking themselves, but that isn't in conjunction with battle. But imagine if the animal headdresses on leaders were mentioned. Moroni wearing a big-ol-bear head would have been epic.

A note about sword warfare. A lot of apologists have mentioned the [Macuahuitl](#) as the [Sword of the Nephites](#). However even if [Apologists believe it's the sword](#) it doesn't show up even in paintings until 600-900 A.D. anywhere, and the Mayan's don't pick it up until about 1000 A.D. Sword warfare was unknown throughout the entire [Book of Mormon time period](#) being mostly spear and dagger.

You see, their warfare [wasn't about killing off the enemy, it was about showing superiority in territory battles like it was in Africa pre-Shakazulu](#).

Walls of dirt and timber

[Walls in Mesoamerica](#) for defense are [very rare](#) and mostly appear after 1000 A.D. as well. And those cities with walls before that period are far away from anything matching the Nephite locations. Although [Chitzen Itza does seem to match](#) as a possibility.

Troop Movements and size

Troop movement is [not a minor thing prior to the 1700's](#). Provisions are incredibly difficult and [camp-followers/camp-wives were large in number and are constantly a topic in actual historical novels](#) but never mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

[Alexander the Great conquered almost the entire known world in 300B.C. \(contemporary with Moroni\) with 40-80,000 troops](#)

In the [Battle of Maling](#) Pang Juan had 100,000 troops and the cook fires are used as a tool of diversion and espionage because such a large army is easy to see from a distance and estimate the size of.

In 9 AD, three legions of Rome were massacred in the forest of Germany, A Roman legion had about 4500 hundred men in it. Double the number for camp followers and the like and you get a total of about 25,000 -

30,000 people in total for the three legions, that gives you the feeling of the bulk of armies and individuals moving.

None of this awkwardness, much the topic of discussion in war diaries and troop movements throughout history, is mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Troops move as easily as though they ate [lembas bread](#) and provisions magically appear when needed. Not a single Nephite army fails from hunger.

[And the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities ~Sun Tzu, art of War](#)

Nephite tactics revolve around city-taking. Sieges of cities are brutal, with people inside suffering the most. Open warfare was far more tactically sound before gunpowder. Remember that Cortez came with 522 men and 16 horses successfully decimated the Aztecs because of the [guns, germs and steel](#) (and written language) that didn't exist as concepts in the New World.

Also worth noting:

In Alma 51, Amalickiah takes over Nephihah. The next time Nephihah is mentioned (Alma 59) they're attacking that city again. There is no mention of retaking it. Possibly just a screw up, but something worth noting that this could be an author error.

The Final Battle, by the numbers

The size of the deaths in hand-to-hand combat in the Book of Mormon rival the battle of [Gettysburg \(220,000 Nephites\)](#) or about 1/3 the total of the civil war. Double the number of Americans killed in WWI. That's with machineguns and tanks.

The next largest, bloodiest battle in history in hand-to-hand combat is probably [The Battle of Cannae](#) (about 100,000 troops)

And yet we have no alternate records, no discussion of troop movements, no details other than total numbers of deaths, no evidence of battle in any location on this scale, nor mounds of skeletons to back it up. This is an extraordinary claim, and should require extraordinary evidence.

When we look at the Book of Mormon weapons, armor, troop movements and so forth, it is clear that history does not match the tale told. Again this requires no anti-Mormon literature, simply a review of anachronisms, combat in history, medical technology and so forth that really call the authenticity of the book in question. Many of these are issues individuals pointed out all the way back to Joseph's days. Very basic issues with verifiable details in the Book of Mormon still lacking in adequate explanation.

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: G is for...

[The Holy Ghost, which is defined differently in Mormonism than Christianity](#). I almost made this one about "grace" which again, is a fascinating topic, and maybe I'll revisit it, but when it came down to it, this quote by Joseph Smith Jr. to Martin Van Buren, then President of the United States, put me on to the Holy Ghost as something to test:

The President asked the Prophet what difference there was between Joseph's church and the other churches of the world. Joseph answered: "We have the correct mode of baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands." Then he said: "We considered that all other considerations were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost" (see History of the Church, 4:42).

That is to say, any impact the Endowment has, or any gifts of the spirit, or any other differences between Mormons and the rest of Christianity rolls up into the Holy Ghost.

As such, I see a testable hypothesis in that statement:

Hypothesis

If Mormons have a significant difference between them and other religions in spiritual claims, then they have the Holy Ghost.

Rejecting the null hypothesis means that the Holy Ghost is not more significantly with the Mormon faiths than any other religion, and ergo, there is nothing special about Mormonism.

How to test the Holy Ghost

Applying scientific rigor to faith is difficult in even the best of circumstances. But here we have an added difficulty: The Mormon faiths claim that the Holy Ghost is, in fact, a personage. A sentient being. Which means He/She/It (does the [Holy Ghost have a genitals](#)? the word "Spirit" used in Holy Spirit in Hebrew is feminine!) could be impacted by the placebo effect, or skew the results to hide its existence, or be impacted by observational bias.

As such, I think the best we can hope for is an [A/B Test](#).

That is to say, we take a random sample of the population of Christians as the control, and another sample of Mormons and see if there is any difference in a set of Key Performance Metrics.

Considerations at this point Many may argue that a grab-bag of all Christian faiths is not a good control. Baptists and Catholics and Jehovah's witnesses have wildly different ideas about revelation and the impact of the Holy Ghost. But we are working from Joseph's hypothesis that the Holy Ghost is the very essence of all that is different between *the rest of Christianity* and Mormonism.

Our second consideration is stated in the LDS bible dictionary:

The power can come upon one before baptism and is the convincing witness that the gospel is true.

That is to say that an individual can be impacted by the Holy Ghost before baptism, even if one is an atheist. This can conflate our findings, but I think the A/B test should tease out impacts on individuals who are

baptized over the rest of the population, just as an A/B test can tease out when people are overall impacted by blue buttons, but a blue button with different text by showing a concrete lift in impact.

Our third consideration is "What are the key metrics?*

Things claimed by Mormonism that could be tested:

1. Priesthood blessings heal the sick (and priesthood is a derivation of the Holy Ghost, according to Joseph's statement)
2. It provides a witness that the gospel is true (convincing witness that the gospel is true)
3. A person receives a testimony of Jesus Christ and of His work and the work of His servants upon the Earth through it.
4. The Holy Ghost acts as a cleansing agent to purify individuals who have it to sanctify them from all sin
5. The manifestation on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) was the gift of the Holy Ghost
6. When a person speaks by the power of the Holy Ghost that same power carries a conviction of the truth unto the heart of the hearer
7. The Holy Ghost knows all things (D&C 35:19) and can lead one to know of future events (2 Pet. 1:21)

So possible KPI's would be # of accurate future events foretold, healings, speaking in tongues, and individuals who testify of Christ, and individuals who know the gospel is true

Of course missionaries love to pad this out with [Galatians 5:22](#)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law

So now we need to take a random sample of people by religion and have them prophesy, try to heal, try to speak in tongues and compare the Mormon group (possibly double blinded) over the control and...

What's that, the guy in the BYU sweatshirt in the back... oh, you want to point out that not everyone has every [gift of the spirit](#)?

Well, yes, that is a lurking variable. Good eye.

Okay, so what can we actually test? Well we could take a sample of bishops and other religious leaders and have them try to use their gift of discernment to show they could identify sin better than the control.

But I'm sure that Mr. Cougar-sweatshirt would argue that we need what a gift of discernment can and cannot do defined first. And he'd be right. Nevertheless, that doesn't stop any number of members stating that the gift of discernment help them in this or that, or going to bishops for advice while what they actually have the ability to do is undefined.

So we push that back on the LDS crowd, define the gift of discernment with concrete impact, and we'll test it. Okay, let's look at prophecies that came true in one group over another... Hmmm, but not all churches claim that they can predict the future and evaluating [Joseph's prophecies](#) leads us deep into [apologetic waters](#).

Okay, so we have healings... I think this one is pretty concrete.

Healing Test

Primary Children's and the U of U medical center and Provo Regional hospitals arguably have more blessings per capita of LDS, FLDS and various offshoots than anywhere in the world.

Luckily the [U.S. Government provides all kinds of measures on hospitals](#) including comparing them to national averages. We find that the U of U, Primary Children's and Utah Valley Regional all fall within the norm of recovery rates. Which implies that either the priesthood is not providing a lift over the rest of the nation (Which admittedly has atheists and Jews mixed in) because it is ineffective, or God is impacting everyone who is not a member at the hospitals just to keep the averages down.

That would be a pretty good test of Priesthood, but what about the Holy Ghost? Could we construct another test to validate the hypothesis?

Test Procedure 1

First, we need to select a group of volunteers who are willing to participate. We have these individuals write their testimony of Jesus, and keep track in a simple app of times they felt influenced by the spirit for 6 months.

We then have them baptized by two groups.

We have a control group of individuals who are regular Christians. And we have a test set comprised of Mormon Elders. We tell all participants they've been baptized into the Mormon faith. The individuals keep track of spiritual experiences over the next 6 months and compare if they had more spiritual experiences over the control as well as against themselves previously (the double test helps to eliminate the placebo effect of just noticing more spiritual things because one was baptized)

Of course, one could argue that the Holy Ghost would be aware of such a test, and would refuse to show up for anyone in the test, just to hide His impact. Of course this is pretty much the opposite of what happens during miracles and is an argument that God must hide from science while still performing miracles, but I guess someone might say as much.

Side note, we could tell if God would want women ordained to the priesthood by performing the same experiment with women with the priesthood and Elder's as the control, no appeals to authority necessary

But there is one group that we can test where God cannot hide...

Apostates!

Apostates are "Darkened", and unable to benefit from the Holy Ghost. Indeed, everywhere apostles talk about them, they say they are worse off than if they had never been baptized.

Proposed test 2

We take a group of active LDS and a group of Christians.

We divide the active LDS into two groups, a control and a test. All three track spiritual promptings, visions, whatever for 6 months.

Then all groups write letters of resignation to the LDS church, believing they will be removed from the records (members will be re-baptized after the experiment).

BUT, only one group of LDS will actually have resigned. We can then track the individual's spiritual experiences and succinctly track if the Holy Ghost actually does impact the actual apostates less than the others.

Now He/She/It could refuse to impact any of the groups, but this might just disprove the Church's claim, after all, we could take samples of members and find the apostates in the past, and track their life experiences and compare them to people who thought they were apostate... and so the Holy Ghost would need to impact absolutely no-one in the church in order to not leave a trace, and at that point the idea that God hides from science becomes laughable.

Because the claim isn't that God is hidden, but that the impact is real, concrete, and leaves a trace. And where there is a trace, science can test.

I am sure that individuals reading this could come up with dozens of additional tests in order to verify the key metrics claimed above. That's the beauty of being willing to accept science. We need not sit around waiting for someone else to design a test, we can create one ourselves.

The Mithryn Challenge

I wrote down a code on a piece of paper and had my friend write down another code. I then told God to send any message, anything at all, and I would follow it, as long as it had my code at the start, and my friend's code at the end. This should be a simple task for the Holy Spirit that is Omni-present and all knowing.

Many people tell me that this test denies faith, but following the instruction would still take faith, it simply removes ambiguity. It clarifies the voice of God from those who would claim to have His voice.

Now half a dozen or more people have come to me claiming that God told them what I should do, and did you know not one of them was told by God there was even a code? Not one.

I might have listened if they had even known that I'd refuse them without giving the code, that maybe God just doesn't work with codes (incidentally this is how TCP/IP connections work... or to put it in layman's terms, I expected God's message to be clear enough to convey YouTube videos over). No, not one was warned about the code.

I would argue it is very much in keeping with [Sacred Handshakes to distinguish messengers](#), and beginning a prophesy with "Thus saith the Lord" and ending with "Amen" as Joseph Smith Jr. once did.

It's a simple test, and yet the Holy Ghost seems unable to pass it, as even my own dreams and visions do not seem to contain the password only my friend knows. It's almost like the Holy Ghost was only in my own head.

Conclusion

The scriptures are replete with examples of people impacted by the spirit, and that impact should leave a lasting impact if real. It should be measurable. And measurable means that we can test a claim like "The Mormon faiths have the Holy Ghost, the other churches do not."

It is a solid proposition and it bares testing. If it does not hold up, the null hypothesis should be rejected, and with it, the entire foundation of the Mormon faiths (any of them).

Test, always test. Any claim that is made is a hypothesis that is meant to be tested, or should be rejected as being a claim of no worth for the definition is too vague to ever claim success

~Mithryn

I leave apostles' and prophet's quotes stating that God is okay with investigation of a religion's claims:

I think a full, free talk is frequently of great use; we want nothing secret nor underhanded, and I for one want no association with things that cannot be talked about and will not bear investigation.
Prophet John Taylor, Journal of Discourses, v. 20, p. 264

If a faith will not bear to be investigated, if its preachers and professors are afraid to have it examined; their foundation must be very weak.
Apostle George A. Smith, Journal of Discourses, v. 14, p. 216

We should be scientific – that is, open-minded, approaching new problems without prejudice, deferring a decision until all the facts are in.
Apostle Hugh B. Brown, “A Final Testimony,” from an Abundant Life, 1999

I admire men and women who have developed the questing spirit, who are unafraid of new ideas as stepping stones to progress. We should, of course, respect the opinions of others, but we should also be unafraid to dissent – if we are informed. Thoughts and expressions compete in the marketplace of thought, and in that competition truth emerges triumphant. Only error fears freedom of expression.
Apostle Hugh B. Brown, “A Final Testimony,” from an Abundant Life, 1999

... convince us of our errors of doctrine, if we have any, by reason, by logical arguments, or by the Word of God, and we will be ever grateful for the information, and you will ever have the pleasing reflection that you have been instruments in the hands of God of redeeming your fellow beings from the darkness which you may see enveloping their minds.
Apostle Orson Pratt, the Seer, pp. 15-16

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: H is for...

Hemisphere. Understanding the western hemisphere is key to understanding the Book of Mormon and the issues that exist in it.

Apologists love to hide in the ignorance about the western hemisphere, by referring to data that is not openly accessible to most individuals. Well, hang on to your hats because after this, the Hemisphere (and heartland) are going to be open and understandable to anyone who has a browser.

Note: Everywhere on FAIRMormon pages there is the disclaimer: The Church has made it abundantly clear that it does not endorse any particular view of Book of Mormon geography. This is a fascinating view that the church is 100% sure the book is true, but refuses to take any stance on where it happens. This is perhaps all one needs to know about Book of Mormon geography.

As [FAIRMormon states](#): "Since a precise knowledge of where the Book of Mormon took place is not necessary for it to bring spiritual conversion, the Church has never offered a revealed or official geography, and is unlikely to do so." But since their scholars spend unending hours trying to find the location, and arguing over it, as well as the Church continues to buy up "Faith promoting" locations such as Nauvoo, the Liberty Jail, Carthage, and other points, perhaps the location of claimed events **does matter**.

What the Book of Mormon actually claims:

There are three features that everyone focuses on:

1. There is a Land Northward
2. There is a Land Southward
3. There is a narrow neck of land

Other features mentioned in the text:

- Sea West
- Sea East
- Written Language
- Gold, brass, silver found in place where Nephi lands, used as currency and made into ornamentation such as King Noah's chair [2 Nephi 5:15, Alma 11, Mosiah 11]
- Land of Desolation with many bones
- Jaredite Society (2200 B.C. - 150 B.C.) existed previously
- Barley [Alma 11, Mosiah 7,9]
- Chariots and Horses, always mentioned in conjunction with travel [Alma 4 and 3 Nephi 12]
- Ox, Cow [1 Nephi 18:25]
- Goat [1 Nephi 18:25]
- Steel working both for Nephi [2 Nephi 5](#) and for the Jaredites [Ether 7:9](#)
- Armor including [head-plates](#)
- Wheat
- Domesticated Sheep ([Ovis Candidas](#), given as the type by FAIR cannot be domesticated down to the DNA of the animal and hence is not considered in this post)
- Fine Twined Linen
- Steel swords for Nephites
- Steel swords for Jaredites
- Nephite Civilization ends in 300-400 A.D. with major battles

- Jaredite Civilization starts about 2000 B.C. with continuous sea voyage [344 days and no sail](#)
- Silk
- Elephants [Ether 9:19]

Apologetic answers - Hemispheric model

[The Hemispheric Geography Theory \(or HGT\) is the traditional understanding of the Book of Mormon. My Relevant Map.](#)

It postulates that the events in the book took place over North and South America, with the Isthmus of Panama as the narrow neck of land.

This is what we might call the "reasonable theory" or "what anyone who had a map, and read the book would expect". It's also the one that might be expected by an upstate farm boy from New York would see when looking at a globe, and was unfamiliar with Mesoamerica.

FAIR critiques that:

Distances in the Book of Mormon are extremely difficult to square with the HGT scale, which requires thousands of miles in a North-South direction.

What do they mean by this? Well possibly because the text says that one could walk from the [Sea West to the Sea East in a single day](#).

A note in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams, one of Joseph Smith's counsellors and scribes, asserts that Lehi's people landed in South America at thirty degrees south latitude (U.A.S. Newsletter (Provo, Utah: University Archaeological Society at Brigham Young University) January 30, 1963, p. 7.).

One can see a selection of the most popular locations of the Book of Mormon here: <http://bookofmormononline.net/map>

(Click the name in the upper right hand corner to see the locations on the map.)

I'm going to use standardized maps for each theory, but I think one can see with how few criteria are actually stated in the book, how many locations match the basic geography. I'm going to use some of my own creation to highlight how far off some aspect.

The hemispheric model is available [here](#) and [my version of the map](#)

Limited Geography Theories

[Guatemala and the Mayan](#)

This is based on a set of statements by Joseph, as well as the Mayan's having a written language. I am going to go into detail on the claims, and the issues in a comment below:

Stephens and Catherwood's researches in Central America abundantly testify of this thing. The stupendous ruins, the elegant sculpture, and the magnificence of the ruins of Guatemala, and other cities, corroborate this statement, and show that a great and mighty people-men of great minds,

clear intellect, bright genius, and comprehensive designs inhabited this continent. Their ruins speak of their greatness; the Book of Mormon [Mormon] unfolds their history.-ED. [Times and Seasons, July 15, 1842, Vol. 3, No 18](#), p.860

...that the ruins of Zarahemla have been found where the Nephites left them: and that a large stone with engraving upon it, as Mosiah said; and a 'large round stone, with the sides sculptured in hieroglyphics,' [such as found in Quiriguá] as Mr. Stephens has published, is also among the left remembrances of the, to him, lost and unknown. We are not agoing [sic] to declare positively that the ruins of Quiriguá are those of Zarahemla, but when the land and the stones, and the books tell the story so plain, we are of [the] opinion, that it would require more proof than the Jews could bring to prove the disciples stole the body of Jesus from the tomb, to prove that the ruins of the city in question, are not one of those referred to in the Book of Mormon. (Joseph Smith, ed., Times and Seasons (October 1, 1842), 3:927.)

Oliver Cowdery, as a series of articles published serially in the Church's Messenger and Advocate. In this history, Cowdery stated that the final battle between the Nephites and the Lamanites occurred at the "Hill Cumorah," the very same Hill Cumorah in New York, where Joseph Smith said he obtained golden plates and other artifacts which were used to translate the Book of Mormon.

All this took place in Central America, the perennial arena of the Big People versus the Little People.
~Hugh Nibley BYU Commencement Ceremony, 19 August 1983

[Mound-builders/Great Lakes](#)

Rod Meldrum and early Mormons believed in this set up. I will discuss more detail in a comment below.

If men, in their researches into the history of this country, in noticing the mounds, fortification, statues, architecture, implements of war, of husbandry, and ornaments of silver, brass, &c.-were to examine the Book of Mormon, their conjectures would be removed, and their opinions altered; uncertainty and doubt would be changed into certainty and facts; and they would find that those things that they are anxiously prying into were matters of history, unfolded in that book...-ED

(Joseph Smith editor after commenting on Josiah Priest's American Antiquities about the objects found in Missouri ("[American Antiquities](#)", [Times and Seasons, July 15, 1842, Volume 3, number 18](#), p. 860)

Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph Smith's mother, in her account of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, says that the divine messenger called the hill where the plates were deposited the "hill of Cumorah" meaning "hill of" the Book of Mormon land "Cumorah". In another account, Mother Smith says that young Joseph, referred to the hill using this description The Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith By His Mother, Edited by Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor, Bookcraft, 1996, p. 107 n. 14; See also History of Joseph Smith by His Mother Lucy Mack Smith, p. 100

The Mound builders actually resemble the Book of Mormon people not at all. Who said they did? The Book of Mormon tells of a people ages removed from the Mound-builders and very far away. Hugh Nibley Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass: The Art of Telling Tales about Joseph Smith and Brigham Young (Vol. 11 of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley

Criticism that [D&C 28 and Zelph place the Lamanites in Missouri](#) is a common apologist tactic, but by doing so [they call Joseph Smith a liar](#).

[The map of the evidence and why none of these theories fit](#)

This map contains all of the relevant biggest finds of data matching the BoM. More in comment below

[Wiki-article about Locations of the Book of Mormon](#)

[FAIRMormon list of statements about locations of the Book of Mormon](#)

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: I is for...

[Isaiah](#), although I really, really wanted it to be for [Jehovah](#). Specifically Deutero-Isaiah and why it is so damning for the Book of Mormon.

Now if you just Google "Deutero-Isaiah" the top results are all apologists (FAIRMormon being right in there) using mostly ad-hominem attacks on the theory. Comments like it is thought by "some modern scholars", or a "liberal view", or that it is "Pseudo-science". There are other issues with Isaiah as well that make this one of the oldest and most key issues with the Book of Mormon, hence any Exmormon who knows his/her ABC's should be aware of all the issues.

First of all, Deutero-Isaiah is not a "new theory":

The so-called Isaiah problem dates back to A.D. 1100, when a Jewish commentator named Moses ben Samuel, Ibn-Gekatilla, denied that Isaiah was the author of certain chapters of the book of Isaiah. Later, in A.D. 1167, Ibn Ezra also questioned the authorship of certain sections of the book of Isaiah.

<https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/isaiah-and-prophets-inspired-voices-old-testament/scientific-analysis-isaiah-authorship>

Those most responsible for the early popularity of the theory in the modern era were the biblical critics from Germany, especially Wellhausen. Scholars who divided the book of Isaiah into multiple authorship were referred to as "divisionists"; those who defended single authorship were referred to as "conservatives." For every conservative scholar today there are eight to ten divisionist scholars.

So it is not a "new theory" nor is it only on the "liberal" side; that's an abuse of the term "conservative" to mean "those who disagree with the theory".

[The vast majority of divisionist scholars divide the book of Isaiah into three authorships](#) which they refer to as Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah, and Trito-Isaiah. Approximately one-third of the divisionists divide the book into two authorships.

Again, this all comes from a BYU paper so no anti-Mormon hate literature here. Just telling the facts as they stand.

Historical Evidence

The majority of the historical evidence that there are multiple authors includes events (such as the Assyrian conquest of Israel, Babylon and surrounding details about the exile) that the author writing in 700 B.C. would not have had knowledge about.

The counter argument is that "He was a prophet, that's the definition of a prophet".

However there are two other issues that happen to line up with the break in the historical dates. Isaiah 2 (or Deutero-Isaiah) from chapters 40 on has **different theological concepts**. Most notably that God demands punishment and that Israel has to suffer to come back from the exile. He talks a lot about the suffering of the innocent that would very much influence the "pride cycle" in the Book of Mormon.

But beyond a theological alteration, and a historical anachronism point, there is a [literary difference](#)

First Isaiah's style is terse and compact, his rhetoric grave and restrained. Second Isaiah often develops an idea at considerable length and his rhetoric is warm and impassioned. And third Isaiah shifts, what is being said, how it is said, and the context in which it is said, most biblical scholars agree there is a split in Isaiah. Whether there is a third Isaiah or more is totally irrelevant for our point as a second Isaiah is sufficient to disprove the Book of Mormon.

Science to the rescue?

Two major studies have been used to "prove" both that Isaiah is unified and that there are multiple authors: [Radday](#) pages 274-277 concluded that it was composed of different parts (chapters 1-35 to 40-66)

- The most dissimilar parts are chapters 1-12 and 40-48. Since Isaiah undoubtedly was the author of the first, he could not have written the latter
- Chapters 13-23 must be ascribed with a very high degree of probability to the author of chapters 1-12 (i.e., Isaiah)
- Chapters 49-57 and 58-66 display so many affinities with each other and so few with the rest of the book that one has to attribute them to yet a third prophet
- The verdict on chapters 23-35 is inconclusive, but these chapters belong in any case to the first part of the book

BYU also ran a computer study, but it was not a word print analysis study. Instead it had a collection of 35 experts on Isaiah send in the pro and con arguments for multiple authorship and then validated or invalidated the arguments. Surprise, surprise, BYU finds that the "balance of evidence" is for a single Isaiah <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/isaiah-and-prophets-inspired-voices-old-testament/scientific-analysis-isaiah-authorship>

The problem with word print and "balance of evidence"

Word print studies require a mountain of text to be even close to accurate. After all Craig Criddle and [Jockers](#) [had to accept that there was too little writing of Joseph Smith's to identify him as an author of the Book of Mormon](#); and there is far less of Isaiah.

But BYU's approach is even more flawed. Simply stacking up all the arguments for going to war with Iraq, and those against going to war with Iraq, and eliminating the invalid ones, and finally concluding "There are 3 reasons to go to war, and 2 reasons not to, ergo we should go to war with Iraq" isn't scientific either.

So what are we to do? We can agree that the majority of Biblical Scholars agree there is more than one Isaiah, but consensus has been wrong before.

Let us concede then that there is a non-zero chance that the Book of Mormon quotes Isaiah as though there was one author, when there really were multiple authors.

This would be clear indication of a forgery. But there is another aspect of history that could give us a clue. That is:

There is no period of Israelite history known to us which offers a suitable background in which such a community could exist except the period between the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 587 BC and the surrender of Babylon to Cyrus of Persia in 539 BC.

That is to say, that the world was so different for Isaiah 1, that he could not have envisioned a world like Isaiah 2 talks about. It would be like Abraham Lincoln discussing an Apple Computer speech given by Steve Jobs. While not necessarily "impossible" with a prophet, the degree of accuracy and detail is far beyond the typical "prophetic ability" typically exhibited by psychics, proclaimed prophets, and especially LDS prophetic predictions since Joseph Smith Jr.

Another detail that is key is the name of "Cyrus", Isaiah is telling people around him about someone who doesn't exist in their minds in 700 B.C. (Hence my Abraham Lincoln/Steve Jobs analogy is accurate, no matter how relevant for us today, Union civil war soldiers would be at a loss why they should care what Steve Jobs said).

[The apologist explanation](#) is that Abraham Lincoln using Steve Jobs would be using him as a "Type" of future events; that is to say "Steve Jobs is an archetype that would make sense throughout history". The truth of this is highlighted since all of you know who "Cyrus" is, and why he is relevant 200 years prior to his existence to Isaiah's audience, as well as how his existence is relevant to us today.

In summary, I think the problem is that the apologists and church don't admit this is a problem. Not a trivial problem, and certainly not a simple one. But it is a complex problem that undermines Joseph Smith's most basic claims, and with a consensus of scholars, and scientific attempts to approach it, it is a *good* reason to doubt. It may not be a case closed, but the literature of the church only describes those who leave for trivial reasons and personal grudges, never because there is a whole body of biblical scholar literature which would end all of Joseph's claims with a tiny bit more evidence. This problem should be discussed once in a while by official individuals (say a prophet who could ask God to clarify why Isaiah is the way it is, or lead scholars to more proof that Isaiah is a single individual), at least not leave it to unofficial apologist websites.

But there are other problems with Isaiah.

Direct copying

There are over 400 verses in which the Nephite prophets quote from Isaiah, and half of these appear precisely as the King James Version renders them. This includes the following errors:

- 2 Nephi 19:1 adds the phrase 'red sea' to Isaiah 9:1, which makes no sense in the geographical context. It also was not in the dead-sea scrolls or any version of Isaiah. Also the Red Sea is 250 miles away from the location of Isaiah
- Isaiah 9:1 should read 'honor' in the place of 'grievously afflict' (Translation error by the KJV translators in the 1611 version). The Book of Mormon makes the same mistake
- Jacob 5 is split from the Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah 5 and then meshed with Paul's discussion of the relation of the Gentiles to the Jews in Romans 11. This is why Jacob 5 goes from talking about olive trees to vineyards (grapes) mid-chapter
- The Book of Mormon includes the italicized words, picked by the translators, which shows an exact copying. This is as telling as finding a phrase only used in one source on one website on the entire internet in a student's paper (Something unique as "Charles Dickens said 'Two pence more and up goes the donkey', and Dodger agreed", for example). A teacher would be correct to identify plagiarism as it immediately identifies the single source from which the student could have copied
- 2 Nephi 12:16 mistranslates "pictures" when it should be "Crafts" or "Vessels"
- 2 Nephi 12:16 includes Upon all the Ships of the Sea, and Upon All the Ships of Tar shish" [Apologists wrote a long paper about how this is not evidence for the Book of Mormon](#)

Any conclusion about the relationship between Isaiah 2:16 and 2 Nephi 12:16 is for most people a matter of faith—as is acceptance of the Book of Mormon in general—not just a

matter of textual analysis. People who accept the authenticity of the Book of Mormon typically favor an explanation for the form of 2 Nephi 12:16 that other people reject, although Latter-day Saint explanations regarding this matter cannot now be substantiated by the available comparative biblical textual evidence alone.

That is to say, by Occam's razor, there is a simpler explanation than angels, golden plates and brass plates and so forth.

- D&C 84:11-13 says that Esaias was a prophet who lived in the days of Abraham, many centuries before Isaiah. And D&C 76:100 distinguishes Esaias from Isaiah. However, [Esaias is the greek form of Isaiah, appearing only in the New Testament](#)
- Isaiah 7:14, which in the KJV is translated "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." This is copied word for word into the Book of Mormon at 2 Nephi 17:14. The problem is that the Hebrew text has the word '*almah*,' which does not mean "virgin," but "young woman": the Hebrew word for "virgin" is '*bethulah*,' and most modern Bible translations do not use "virgin" to translate Isaiah 7:14. This translation error is due to translating first into Greek and then into the Latin Vulgate. By translating directly from Greek into English, the error becomes obvious. This should not have been the case for a direct translation via divine means
- 2 Nephi 24:12 – The only place the word "Lucifer" occurs in the entire Bible is in the King James Version at this passage. Other translations do not have "Lucifer" there (or anywhere at all), but translate the word correctly as "day-star," "star of the morning" or "morning star." The original word is 'helel' or "Morning star" (Venus). The greek to Latin translation for Venus is "Light Bringer" (Lucifer)
- 2 Nephi 26:14-17 mentions a familiar spirit, out of the ground with an Isaiah quote; however, it is referring to necromancy which is odd to say the least
- Isaiah 14:19 (KJV) says: "But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, [and as] the *raiment* of those that are slain..." Joseph Smith renders the word as "Remnant" in the JST even though the word Hebrew word "lebush" is clear

Conclusion

Taken together, the probability of Deutero-Isaiah, and the plagiarism issues with Isaiah go beyond just "A serious reason to doubt" to highlight that Joseph was willing to copy other texts, and was not doing so by divine means.

The summary: If you are going to make a pseudo-biblical text and copy large portions from Isaiah, make sure you read Hebrew or the tiny details will trip you up. Further, using ancient documents for which there is good evidence discovered later will probably expose your lack of knowledge, or the true non-omniscience of the deity who is providing you, your inspiration.

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: J is for...

Jehovah. The big-dog. The main deity in most religions today. From Yahweh to renaming him to be the premortal name of Jesus, this impacts a lot of people.

The key point is that the LDS faith believes that **Jehovah is the premortal name of Jesus**. Jehovah in history was pronounced Yahweh and wasn't worshiped alone (Miller, Patrick D (1986). A History of Ancient Israel and Judah. Westminster John Knox Press. Page 110).

The earliest plausible references to it are in Egyptian texts that place him among the nomads of the southern Transjordan. Dever, William G. (2003b). Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From. Eerdmans page 128.

In the oldest biblical literature he is a typical ancient Near Eastern "divine warrior" who leads the heavenly army against Israel's enemies; Hackett, Jo Ann (2001). "'There Was No King In Israel': The Era of the Judges". In Coogan, Michael David. The Oxford History of the Biblical World. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-513937-2 page 158–159.

Which is to say that Yahweh, as a concept, developed over time, shifting and changing in the earliest documents, to later documents with a traceable trail. This is a problem for anyone who wants to claim Yahweh, or Jehovah is a real, existing being.

It's like if you ask any kid about Batman, they can probably give you the basic lore: "parents were killed, throws batarangs, has a sidekick named Robin, and fights the Joker." So too, if you ask a Christian about Jehovah, they can give some basics.

But if you ask someone who read the comics, the actual written word of the day, you might learn that Batman used to kill, and was Azrael for a while when Bruce Wayne's back was broken, and there are three Robins, as well as two girl ones including Frank Miller's questionable timeline; and let's not forget the second Girl Robin isn't called Robin.

Because the details are messy. And when you read the actual issues of the written stories of Yahweh you get a very different picture. He starts out like Thor, and then becomes more and more dignified over the years. Or if you like, [you can read it in comic form](#).

The LDS view is thusly challenged

All of this, is to say; problematic for the perception that Jesus was Jehovah before this world. It requires one to ONLY read the bible, and not any of the contemporary documents to maintain this view. It is a view entirely driven by ignoring the context.

But even within the Bible there are issues

It is important to know that **"The Lord" in the KJV of the bible** was put in place purely to reverence the name of God in something called the "ineffable name doctrine"(<http://www.jewfaq.org/name.htm>), and that it always means "Jehovah".

This becomes problematic in a very key scripture (*Warning we're about to get theologically technical here*):

Namely in [Psalm 110](#), starting at verse 1 we get:

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Or to translate it with less respect, but clearer:

Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

The question becomes who is Jehovah calling "My Lord", and in the New Testament, [Jesus answers this in Mathew 22](#) declaring himself as the "My Lord" in the verse:

44 Saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David.
43 He saith unto them, how then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,
44 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?
45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?
46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

And so you've got Jehovah telling Jesus to sit on His right hand until Jehovah makes the world Jehovah's foot stool. Which Jehovah are we talking to now, [Sybil](#)?

Other problems with Jesus/Jehovah

Beyond an identity crisis of a drunken Thor-like war God telling Jesus to "park it until he becomes Jesus and takes over the world", we also have issues with the Jesus narrative.

[Blood from every pore](#) having pressure sufficient to let a drop of blood come out of a pore would require about a teaspoon of blood, and that if one bleeds out of every pore, you have to have thousands of gallons of blood come out. The average person contains about 5.5 liters of blood, meaning that Jesus must have had a superpower of "Spontaneous blood generation". This is a claim that is on the level of "Batman exists because he is a ninja, ergo no one has seen him" and should require extraordinary evidence that Jesus generated blood anywhere else, or should be dismissed as a pet theory.

The problem is, that Mormonism doesn't just have Mosiah stating that Jesus bled from every pore, it has Jesus/Jehovah/Yaweh [stating it in revelation](#).

The New Testament (Matthew 2:16-18) has Herod killing 2-year-olds to hunt down Jesus. Herod was indeed a tyrant, but nothing outside of Matthew hints at such a massacre of children.

Luke 2:1 tells of a decree from Caesar Augustus that everyone should return to ancestral homelands for a census. No such Roman decree (or anything like it) is ever mentioned outside of Luke.

The trial of Jesus is said to have taken place at night on the first night of Passover before the Sanhedrin. The members of the Sanhedrin were the leading rabbinic figures of the time. It is nearly incredible that they would violate their own rabbinic Law to meet in trial at night or on the Passover, let alone both. There is no corroboration of this apart from the gospel stories.

For [more scientific issues with the Jesus story](#).

The Atonement

Here is where we get into a scientific/theological issue that is central to Mormonism, and most of Christianity, that makes no sense.

First we must define the Atonement, which is that God (Jehovah or Elohim?) so loved the World, He sent His son, so that those who sinned could be redeemed. That is to say, that sacrificing an innocent life would somehow make guilty individuals clean. This idea makes no sense.

Let's say that Batman has three Robins. If he lets Joker bash [Jason Todd's head](#) in because Jason was innocent, does that somehow vindicate Dick Grayson and Tim Drake? Does the sacrifice of an innocent help the guilty?

But Mormonism goes beyond the bizarre concept of sacrificing an innocent deity to redeem fallen mankind to explain that the [natural man](#), how we were created into this world, is sufficient reason to [damn us all to an eternal punishment](#) unless we let ~Jason Todd be hit by a crowbar~ sacrifice an innocent deity.

How does this make any sense at all? 6 billion units of sin; Billions of gallons of sperm, Billions of gallons of blood spilt in anger, unbelievable amounts of time and effort expended both to control or dominate, or in prison camps subjugated for unjust whims of petty dictators, all wiped clean by a half-human sacrifice. It seems, well, primitive in nature.

The harmony of the Gospels

Another issue for the LDS and the Jesus/Jehovah situations is that the theology depends heavily on the accuracy of the entire bible. If, for example, Jesus didn't actually cast the 1st level spell "Create food" repeatedly for 5000 people, the Mormon mythos of food generation for pioneers is called into question.

If it is discovered that Jesus was not married, Brigham and other's statements are left to be apologized away. Indeed, the view on Jesus is a very 1800's viewpoint. Things [Jesus taught \(Jesus tells us his mission is to make family members hate one another, so that they shall love him more than their kin \(Matt. 10:35-37\). He promises salvation to those who abandon their wives and children for him \(Matt. 19:29, Mark 10:29-30, Luke 18-29-30\). Disciples must hate their parents, siblings, wives, and children \(Luke 14:26\). The rod is not enough for children who curse their parents; they must be killed \(Matt. 15:4-7, Mark 7:9-10, following Lev. 20:9\)](#) that were questionable were already mostly smoothed over by the time Joseph Smith Jr. came on the scene, and just like the Jehovah/Yahweh issue, Joseph seems not only unaware of the issues as he incorporates them into the day-to-day beliefs of his followers, he binds the faith to [ideas that hadn't stood up to questioning in hundreds of years](#).

From [Jesus visiting John the Baptist](#), to [Jesus not attending temple weddings](#) the whole mythos is as flawed as a comic book. And they add to it with the idea that [Jesus was married](#)

Basically, all the flaws that apply to Biblical Christianity are compounded in Mormonism, and then enhanced by throwing in the Jesus/Jehovah connection. These ideas are never addressed by the Mormon theology, but are instead, ignored or simply ascribed to the miraculous workings of God.

If God really did restore a religion in the 1800's one would think He might address philosophical arguments that had been confusing mankind for the last few hundred years. He might have helped clarify who He was, and how interactions happened. But if the concept of God is ever changing depending on the author, then Mormonism is just one more set of fan fiction, drafted based on the current understanding, which has been written over the course of millennia.

Finally, to illustrate the point, individuals took the historical record and attempted to reconstruct what [Jesus would actually look like](#). The picture we get by following even what the text claims is so amazingly different from what the [LDS church portrays](#) it's almost like one isn't talking about the same person at all. Is that [Azrael](#) under that [cowl, Bruce](#)?

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: K is for...

K is for Korihor, that rascally pseudo-atheist and social-Darwin bad guy that Alma bravely goes toe-to-toe with.

Our first issue with [Korihor is his name](#). Turns out it's an English name by nature. Yup, his very existence in the Book of Mormon is an anachronism. Further he is an odd one because a land "Corihor" is mentioned in [Ether, Chapter 14:28](#).

In addition, Korihor's doctrine seems a touch out of place for 70-80 B.C. Although Nehor's teachings more closely resemble [Universalism in the 1800's](#) we find some similar ideas to Korihor as well. So his philosophies are also somewhat anachronistic, although it is easily argued that either the Devil decided to try to speed up man's thought process by teaching 1800's thinking to a man in 80 B.C. or that these thoughts could come about in any society.

But let's get really to what the story of Korihor says, and why this is so damaging for the Book of Mormon. First, I'm just going to make a slight alteration to show how the story is basically propaganda. We're going to just replace "Joseph Smith" with Korihor, and "Alma" with the preacher "Alexander Campbell". I ask all believing members to consider if they would accept the exact same story as true if presented thusly:

In the year of our Lord, 1830 there came a man of New York, and he was Anti-Christ, for he began to preach unto the people against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets, that the ministers taught.

And this Anti-Christ, whose name was Joseph Smith, (and the law could have no hold upon him) began to preach unto the people that there should be he had seen Christ. And after this manner did he preach, saying:

Do you see the spin already at play in the story? How one-sided the tale is?

Now, what does this Korihor teach that is so ghastly, so amazingly bad that God will break all the "I don't interact with man so that they can have Faith" rules over this guy:

O ye that are bound down under a foolish and a vain hope, why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things? Why do ye look for a Christ? For no man can know of anything which is to come.

Well, considering that teaching the name "Christ" is an anachronism, not even found in the Bible, it might be understandable that people might doubt. I mean, King Benjamin mentioning Christ's name in [Mosiah 3:8](#) is amazingly prophetic. So much so that even Joseph Smith himself didn't prophesy anything even close to as accurate. Imagine if Joseph had even foreseen the events at his death well enough to choose a successor, there would have been no [succession crisis](#). Or if any of the Prophets and Apostles had such clarity around [Mark Hofmann](#).

Perhaps we should give some credit to people who were uncertain of an event that would be 100 years in their future that they were unlikely to see.

We are also not given an alternative view. How many things had the prophets been wrong about recently?

How many times had priests in the church been caught abusing their power?

Now this idea, "no man can know of anything which is to come" probably should have been countered with the [prediction of star locations](#) of which Mayans were famous for and even developed mathematics to explain, if this occurred in Guatemala.

Regardless, Korihor continues:

14 Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold, they are foolish traditions of your fathers.

15 How do ye know of their surety? Behold, ye cannot know of things which ye do not see; therefore ye cannot know that there shall be a Christ.

And certainly, after [letter J](#) there is a reason to doubt there was a Christ. The guy seems to be unsure who he was, or when he lived. The evidence is scant that the New Testament portrays the activities accurately and the gospels aren't even contemporary documents allowing false memories or conflation of information. But yet remember, Mosiah knew his Mother's name, from another continent centuries before Jesus was born. The contradiction on God's interaction with data retention and clear messages to His followers is deafening with this story.

Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold, they are foolish traditions of your fathers.

And yet; we have so many things that were quoted as doctrine today, that are now held as foolish traditions, one might be forgiven for siding with Korihor. Indeed [Adam God](#), [Race and the Priesthood](#), [Secret councils](#), [marrying polyandrously behind one's wife's back](#), the list goes on and on.

And the list of things [Prophets cannot answer](#) today could give one a few doubts as well. If Korihor's prophets were anything like ours, his doubting statements are sensible.

Ye look forward and say that ye see a remission of your sins. But behold, it is the effect of a [frenzied mind](#); and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so.

An interesting note here, "the effect of a frenzied Mind" was spelled: "the effects of a phrensied mind" in the original translation of the book of Mormon

And many more such things did he say unto them, telling them that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men.

We've discussed how bizarre the atonement is. Hit Jason Todd on the head again with a Crowbar, Alma, he hasn't died for the innocent Robins yet!

But every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature

This is an interesting point of view. Clearly this does occur (some people fair better than others, and a lot has to do with how people handle themselves) and yet the placing implies something fascinating. The idea that people fair according to their own efforts, is directly after "No atonement"; ergo this implies that one would fare better in this life, with the atonement and Christ than without. It's part of the "prosperity gospel"!

Therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime.

These three are interesting in juxtaposition, because even though one may prosper according to his own Genius, or strength, it does not in any way follow that "What one does is no crime".

Maybe "is no sin" but Crime is definitely handled differently at the beginning of the chapter:

Now if a man desired to serve God, it was his privilege; or rather, if he believed in God it was his privilege to serve him; but if he did not believe in him there was no law to punish him.

This reeks of the idea that ["if you take away God, you take away all morality"](#) that has been soundly refuted.

And thus he did preach unto them, leading away the hearts of many, causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness.

This idea that the people had their heads bowed in righteousness, and lift it up to wickedness is... questionable. Again imagine that a Christian Preacher said:

The Mormons lifted their heads up to all manner of wickedness following Joseph Smith, for example [they sang songs on the Sabbath](#)

It's very offensive because what defines wickedness to one group is a permitted thing by another (Quakers forbade singing at all, and once Joseph asked Rachel Ivins (Heber J. Grant's mother) to sing on the Sabbath and she was shocked. Her relatives criticized that she would sing hymns now that she was a Mormon)

Yea, leading away many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms—telling them that when a man was dead, that was the end thereof.

This is often used to tie Korihor to Atheists, in very poor way making members feel equipped to go against the secular humanist or simple non-believer. And yet, the Book of Mormon does not actually convince the man **spoiler alert** it strikes him down with divine might. And expecting that end doesn't help any conversation.

But behold they were more wise than many of the Nephites; for they took him, and bound him, and carried him before Ammon, who was a high priest over that people.

This line is bizarre. Previously it was stated that no one could be arrested for their beliefs. But here we have an unlawful arrest and it is praised as wise.

He was taken and bound and carried before the high priest, and also the chief judge over the land.

Imagine if religious preachers took and bound Joseph Smith for teaching his doctrine, what would that be called? This is religious persecution for it was established this man committed no crime. Yet he, (Like Alma and Amulek will be in later verses) is bound simply for his belief.

I do not teach this people to bind themselves down under the foolish ordinances and performances which are laid down by ancient priests, to usurp power and authority over them, to keep them in ignorance, that they may not lift up their heads, but be brought down according to thy words.

Foolish ordinances and performances indeed. Take a look at any religion you don't believe in and watch them do one of their most sacred rituals and one can't help but feel it's a "foolish performance". An interesting side

note [the concept that priests "Usurp power and authority" was in the footnotes in the New Testament in the 1820-1833 time period](#)

Ye say that this people is a free people. Behold, I say they are in bondage. Ye say that those ancient prophecies are true. Behold, I say that ye do not know that they are true.

If people feel they must give their loyalty, their money and their time to an organization to reach god, are they free? Even if that religion is true; does it not require willful subservience just by nature? Perhaps not slavery, but a type of indentured servitude?

Ye say that this people is a guilty and a fallen people, because of the transgression of a parent. Behold, I say that a child is not guilty because of its parents.

Again, the atonement idea and the confusing idea that "Because of Adam and Eve" we are all put into a mortal state where the natural man is an enemy of God

Now when the high priest and the chief judge saw the hardness of his heart, yea, when they saw that he would revile even against God, they would not make any reply to his words; but they caused that he should be bound; and they delivered him up into the hands of the officers, and sent him to the land of Zarahemla.

More illegal abduction and incarceration. Yay, clearly these are the good guys!

Now Alma said unto him: Thou knowest that we do not glut ourselves upon the labors of this people; for behold I have labored even from the commencement of the reign of the judges until now, with mine own hands for my support, notwithstanding my many travels round about the land to declare the word of God unto my people.

I wonder if Alma had just built [a Mall](#)

And notwithstanding the many labors which I have performed in the church, I have never received so much as even one senine for my labor; neither has any of my brethren, save it were in the judgment-seat; and then we have received only according to law for our time.

It's kinda hard to believe you, Alma, when you've got an illegally held prison there. I mean, how financially transparent was Alma? How transparent was the church? How would Korihor know that he was upright and honest?

And on it goes until we get to this line:

Behold, I know that thou believest, but thou art possessed with a lying spirit, and ye have put off the Spirit of God that it may have no place in you; but the devil has power over you, and he doth carry you about, working devices that he may destroy the children of God.

And here we have a real problem because instead of using real rational answers to explain things, the answer is that anyone questions how church funds are used, or if Christ is real must have a "lying spirit". The rational discussion is moved to the metaphysical.

If thou wilt show me a sign, that I may be convinced that there is a God, yea, show unto me that he hath power, and then will I be convinced of the truth of thy words.

Wait, what? If Alma will show him a... did he really talk like that? Or did he say "Can you give evidence of God and then I will believe" because asking for a reason to believe shouldn't be a crime. Remember, kids, insisting on evidence before belief is worth the "smite" button on God's computer.

And here is the evidence given:

- The testimony of his brethren
- The scriptures
- All things
- The Earth
- The Earth's motion
- And planets that move regularly

Hmmm... well with evidence like that, how did we end up with 200+ offshoots of Mormonism. I mean, it's clear as day.

Further, we've explained those things and needed no God to do so such as Gravity and origin of the earth.

That thou shalt become dumb, that thou shalt never open thy mouth any more, that thou shalt not deceive this people any more.

And here we have it. If you can't win the argument tell the other person to shut up. It's god's will, kiddos. Also, I love that they have him write his confession. No way is a written confession ever forged to convince people. Never in history.

This story is littered with anachronism, bad thought, and in the end harms relationships. It's been a sticking point for people in and out of the church since the beginning and is a clear evidence of propaganda

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: L is for...

Lamanite. Specifically the Book of Mormon makes a very testable claim, that is, that Lamanites exist, they are a large people who had the knowledge of Jesus Christ and fell into darkness. Their skin was cursed to darkness because of their unbelief.

But the Religion makes more claims:

Their skin will be whitened if they are faithful

After the people again forgot the Lord and dissensions arose, some of them took upon themselves the name Lamanites and the dark skin returned. When the Lamanites fully repent and sincerely receive the gospel, the Lord has promised to remove the dark skin. The Lord declared by revelation that, 'before the great day of the Lord shall come, Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness, and the Lamanites shall blossom as a rose.' The dark skin of those who have come into the Church is no longer to be considered a sign of the curse. Many of these converts are delightful and have the Spirit of the Lord. Perhaps there are some Lamanites today who are losing the dark pigment. Many of the members of the Church among the Catawba Indians of the South could readily pass as of the white race; also in other parts of the South.

Prophet Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, v. 3, p. 123, 1953

The day of the Lamanites is nigh. For years they have been growing delightful, and they are now becoming white and delightful, as they were promised.

Prophet Spencer W. Kimball, General Conference, Oct. 1960

The Lord has never indicated that black skin came because of being less faithful. Now, the Indian; we know why he has changed, don't we? The Book of Mormon tells us that; and he has a dark skin, but he has a promise there that through faithfulness that they all again become a white and delightful people.

[Apostle LeGrand Richards, Interview by Wesley P. Walters and Chris Vlachos](#), Aug. 16, 1978, Church

That tribe, or most its people, are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon). Those Indians, at least as many as I have observed, were white and delightful; as white and fair as any group of citizens of our country. I know of no prophecy, ancient or modern, that has had a more literal fulfillment.

George Edward Clark, quoted in McKeever and Johnson, "Pure and Delightful," *Mormonism Researched*, Spring 1994, p. 5

Where they are located

Native Americans in Missouri included in definition

The mission to western Missouri in 1830-1831 was important for three reasons: it demonstrated the Church's commitment to preach **to the descendants of the Lamanites of the Book of Mormon**;

http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Lamanite_Mission_of_1830-1831

The scriptures make it very clear that Missouri includes Lamanites:

D&C 29:8 And now, behold, I say unto you that it is not revealed, and no man knoweth where the city Zion shall be built, but it shall be given hereafter. Behold, I say unto you that it shall be on the borders by the Lamanites.

D&C 54: 8 And thus you shall take your journey into the regions westward, unto the land of Missouri, unto the borders of the Lamanites.

D&C 57's heading makes it very clear that Joseph thought the people around him were Lamanites

Nevertheless, **FAIR tries to obfuscate what the definition of "borders" is**. Actually, after reading the whole page, I'm still not sure the counter argument. It seems their statement:

The name "Lamanite" later ultimately referred to a religious/political faction whose distinguishing feature was its opposition to the church

This would imply that we, exmormons are "Lamanites", and that if we returned to the faith our skin would get whiter too. It becomes just nonsense when put into current context.

Regardless, if the Lamanites are not in or around the church now the scripture in D&C 3 is inaccurate:

D&C 3:18-20 And this testimony [The Book of Mormon] shall come to the knowledge of the Lamanites, and the Lemuelites, and the Ishmaelites, who dwindled in unbelief because of the iniquity of their fathers,

Joseph Smith to Native Americans declared:

The Great Spirit has given me a book, and told me that you will soon be blessed again. The Great Spirit will soon talk with you and your children. This is the book which your fathers made. I wrote upon it (showing them the BoM).

The Prophet Joseph Smith, Official Church History, Vol 5, p. 381

Native Americans in Utah included in definition

We are now going to the Lamanites, to whom we intend to be messengers of instruction... We will show them that in consequence of their transgressions a curse has been inflicted upon them – in the darkness of their skins. We will have intermarriages with them, they marrying our young women, and we taking their young squaws to wife. By these means it is the will of the Lord that the curse of their color shall be removed and they restored to their pristine beauty...

Prophet Brigham Young, quoted in The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed, pp. 58-59

These natives belong to the house of Israel.... The Lord has taken from this race any disposition for improvement even to this day; the best of them consider it a disgrace to work.

The Prophet Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses Vol. 10, p.359

The work of the Lord among the Lamanites must not be postponed, if we desire to retain the approval of God.

The Prophet John Taylor, Official Church Publication, Millennial Star 44:33; Oct 18, 1882

The Lamanites [Native Americans], now a down-trodden people, are a remnant of the house of Israel. The curse of God has followed them as it has done the Jews, though the Jews have not been darkened in their skin as have the Lamanites.

Prophet Wilford Woodruff, Journal of Discourses, v. 22, p. 173

I am satisfied that although we have done a little for the Lamanites, we have got to do a great deal more. I sealed the first Lamanite-ish man and woman together that ever were sealed in this dispensation.

The Prophet Wilford Woodruff, St. George Conference, June 12th and 13th, 1892

Native Americans in either North and South America or both

We believe that the existing Indian tribes are all direct descendants of Lehi and his company, and that therefore they have sprung from men all of whom were of the house of Israel.

Apostle James E. Talmage, The Articles of Faith, p.293

He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an **account of the former inhabitants of this continent (America)**, and the source from whence they sprang.

[JSH 1:33-34](#)

We also bear testimony that the "Indians" (so called) of North and South America are a remnant of the tribes of Israel; as is now made manifest by the discovery and revelation of their ancient oracles and records.

OFFICIAL CHURCH PROCLAMATION OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST, OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS. April 6, 1845

The Book of Mormon is a record of the forefathers of our western Tribes of Indians... By it we learn that our western tribes of Indians are descendants from that Joseph that was sold into Egypt...

The Prophet Joseph Smith, Letter to Rochester, New York, newspaper editor N. C. Saxton, January 4, 1833

The 'remnant' of Book of Mormon peoples are the Indians that now inhabit this country (The United States)

Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith's Teachings, Mormon Church, Deseret Book, p. 336

The Lamanites Will Become a Great People - The Lord said that when his coming was near, the Lamanites would become a righteous and respected people.... **Great numbers of Lamanites in North and South America and the South Pacific are now receiving the blessings of the gospel."**

Current Official Church Instruction Handbook, Gospel Principles, page 265

There are more than 60 million people of Lamanite extraction. It is no accident that the Church now prospers among them in Mexico, Central and South America, in the islands of the sea, and among the Indian tribes of North America.

Apostle Boyd K. Packer, Church Ensign, Mar 1974, page 3

In all ... there are seventy-five million six hundred thousand who share in your [Native American Lamanite] birthright, of whom thirty million nine hundred ninety thousand are pure Indians.

Apostle Boyd K. Packer, Indian Week Conference at BYU, cited by Armand L. Mauss, All Abraham's Children, p. 96

[1975 edition of the ensign](#)

Polynesian Islands are included in definition

You Polynesians of the Pacific are called Samoan or Maori, Tahitian or Hawaiian, according to your islands. There are probably sixty million of you on the two continents and on the Pacific Islands, all related by blood ties. The Lord calls you Lamanites, a name which has a pleasant ring, for many of the grandest people ever to live upon the earth were so called. In a limited sense, the name signifies the descendants of Laman and Lemuel, sons of your first American parent, Lehi; but you undoubtedly possess also the blood of the other sons, Sam, Nephi, and Jacob. And you likely have some Jewish blood from Mulek, son of Zedekiah, king of Judah. The name Lamanite distinguishes you from other peoples. It is not a name of derision or embarrassment, but one of which to be very proud. (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p.596)

So with all of these statements, who would dare say we can't find the Lamanites, and why?

One might think that people saying that we cannot find the Lamanites, given all of these quotes were anti-Mormons, but instead we find it of [FAIRMormon apologists](#).

One traditional assumption that does not conform to an enlarged understanding of the text is the once-held opinion that the Lehighes populated all of the Americas. (See the FAIR brochure "Were the Lehighes Alone in the Americas?") Most LDS scholars agree that the Lehighes were a small incursion into a larger existing population of Native Americans)

Yes, these anti-Spencer W. Kimball, anti-Boyd K Packer, Anti current church manual, anti-Wilford Woodruff, Anti-Brigham Young and anti-Joseph Smith people are the very apologists meant to keep the faith.

And WHY would knowledgeable individuals who see themselves as the protectors of the faith ever go against Joseph/Brigham/Wilford/Talmage/Packer/Kimball and others?

Because scientifically these ideas do not hold up.

[Whether it be a discussion of how and when the inhabitation of the Americas go here](#)

[How the migration of individuals occurred](#)

[Or what the DNA of those individuals are](#) there is nothing to support the descendancy of the Native Americas from Jerusalem in 600 B.C.

I think it important to note that Bishop Simon Southerton set out to disprove the "land bridge" theory with his DNA research, and instead decided to reject the religion and follow the evidence. The FAIRMormon Apologists, instead reject the prophets and alter the religion to try and maintain a sliver of belief.

Seriously, the science is so sound, that not even the apologists can refute it. Not just one branch of science, but anthropology, archeology, biology, genetics, and more agree: No Lamanites in the places stated above.

What these beliefs led to

If you are not familiar with the [Indian reformation program of the LDS church](#), it's time to learn. This belief that the Native Americans were Lamanites was not just a thought experiment. It had real actions with real consequences

It destroyed families, culture and heritage all born on the backs of the faithful. And you might say, well, that was in the past, however:

In 2000 the last student graduated from the program, though the program never was officially discontinued.

That's right, the program is still on the books. The last graduate was in the year 2000. A contemporary of many who are reading this. In contrast, Simon Southerton's excommunication was in 2005, his book published in 2004.

Vine Deloria Jr., a Sioux Indian and political science professor at the University of Arizona, made a similar observation...Mormons and Indians share a common heritage, but he complained Mormons are taking Indian children off reservations and indoctrinating them in the church's beliefs.' "Deloria continued by stating, '...he sees great parallels between Mormons and Indians in the 1840's to the 1890's when the federal government tried to break down their social structures.' He said the Mormon Church Placement Program threatens Indians.

Salt Lake Tribune, April 9, 1984

...when non-Mormon Indians are asked about the program [LDS placement program for Native Americans], their response is invariably bitter and hostile as they explain that many Indians view the program as a form of kidnapping that takes away the Indian community's most prized people, its youth.

Bob Gottlieb and Peter Wiley, "The Kids Go Out Navaho, Came Back Donny and Marie," Los Angeles Magazine, December 1979, p. 140

Conclusion

Race and the Priesthood is a nice essay. It's a good start. But the racist teachings and ideas in the church continue as they are woven to the very core that Native American traditions and heritage needs to be replaced by Church Doctrine and "white living" to be valuable in contributing to humanity.

Again, science, from very early on, disagreed with Joseph Smith on the origin of the Native American. It continues to do so with such confidence that apologists have had to back down on prophetic claims to maintain belief.

The backing off of apologists from the claims of the church needs, at least, to be followed up with an official apology by church leaders to the homes and families they damaged by their beliefs shown in the Native American Placement Program, as well as an honest statement that either previous prophets were wrong in their claims, or that science does, in fact, conflict with LDS belief and allow each member to reconcile that.

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: M is for...

[Mysteries](#) or if you prefer the [Meat](#) not to be given before milk. Well we've had decades of milk via Correlation, and so it's time to tackle the Meat. And in this case, "Meat" or "Mysteries" just means "weird stuff that makes no sense logically, so we hide it until you're really convinced".

This will be a rapid fire (Gish Gallop if you will) of topics covered on the [LDS Infobases CD under "Mysteries" produced by the church and sold at BYU back in 1990](#) (It was labelled "do not show to anti-mormons"). We're just going to lightly address each. However we **encourage** individuals to research each one on their own, as there is no debate time limit, and people can do their own research (there is no such thing as a Gish Gallop on the internet).

The Law of Adoption. Joseph Smith introduced the Law of Adoption and one can see in the sealing records of Nauvoo men being sealed to other men. These were Dynastic sealings. As such, why the hell did Joseph need to marry a 14 year old, [/u/BrianHales](#)? He sealed himself to John Bernhisel as a son, so why not Heber C. Kimball, rather than marrying a girl "a few months before her 15th birthday? Dynastic sealings had their own mechanism prepared.

Adoption – Abrahamic covenant. In short we all become children of Abraham, [who likely didn't exist](#) by converting to Mormonism, and all that without cutting off the [end of our penises](#) as Abraham promised to do as part of the covenant.

Adam-God – 37 years of quotes prove Brigham really taught it, but shhh...it's weird, don't tell the common member. Fundamentalists love this stuff.

Atonement – We already covered this in Letter "J", but if you think it was weird before, this goes into "deeper implications" of sacrificing Jason Todd for Dick Grayson, Tim Drake, and Daeon Wayne, because innocent sacrifice for the guilty makes sense.

Atonement, Blood – While more logical than sacrificing an innocent person's blood, the whole "Throw a spear through your wife committing adultery" image gets a bad rap. In short, some sins are so serious, [we kill you for them](#).

Buffeting of Satan – God is so loving, that when you've had your calling and election made sure, he'll hand you over to the school bully for a few years, rather than torture you for eternity. Totally makes sense.

Childbirth-no pain in – Ladies, you can tear this one to shreds.

Christ, Married – Oh yes, it goes there. Evidence via quotes and such that Christ was married. No science here so I'll move on.

Christ, Savior of other worlds – [One word](#).

Council of Fifty – These might prove Joseph Smith a Traitor, but we're going to dance around that and provide quotes that look great and will still make members scratch their heads.

Calling and Election – God loves you so much, you can do anything and not be wrong. Let's just consider for a moment that John D. Lee, who was EXECUTED and EXCOMMUNICATED for the mountain meadows massacre had his calling and election made sure. Yup.

Cosmic Kingship – the use of the right hand to the square - [I believe I get my own planet](#) actually that the governing principles of the universe are contained in the temple concept of a right angle and that will allow me to govern my own univerrrrrrse! (But the lyrics didn't work.)

Endowment – God gives special gifts to those who pay enough to enter his house. These gifts are concrete and real, unless you test them. Also, there are lots of places the temple stuff was done outside the temple by Joseph Smith, but now you have to do it in the temple and pay tithing, not because the church is really a corporation but because the leaders say so which is totally legit /end Brother Jake voice.

Gods in Embryo – Everything those Christian ministers accused the LDS of believing a heretical concept that man can be God in one place. Also, Gordon B. Hinckley was "unsure we teach it" and "it was just a couplet" despite individuals compiling whole research papers on the subject. I guess the question is "how does one become a god" and "Can we test that". The [digging up of Joseph Smith's bones should prove that he has not, in fact, become a god yet](#). There's something we could test with SCIENCE!

Last-days, Armageddon – And the church says it's not a doomsday cult. All the evidence you need in one place.

Lehi landed in Guatemala – All the evidence and quotes you need to disprove those heartland-loving fools.

Lord - see my face and know that I am – Everyone can see God, you're just not trying hard enough. Be more faithful and you can also see the emperor's clothes too!

Melchizedek was Shem – The timelines disprove the bible and Mormonism... so hell, just make up new names to make the timelines fit.

New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage and Plural Marriage – Learn about Joseph's polygamy BEFORE the church admitted to it. THIS is what all you non-historical readin' members should have been into this whole time.

Perdition – Where the vast majority of church members of this generation are going to end up. (Quotes that point out people who leave the church are going to outer darkness, such as all of us. Because god loves you so much, that if you reject a kid in a white shirt at your door, or you leave a religion that doesn't make logical sense, you'll be in darkness for eternity.)

Position – One more attempt at defining Mormon Doctrine that fails.

Priesthood, Women and the – DO NOT TELL THE NEWSROOM about this. One of the deeper doctrines is that women have the priesthood and Kate Kelly was right all along. But it's a "Mystery" so let's just bury that back down and ignore, k?

"Second Comforter" – More on the calling and election made sure and the importance of keeping in ~secret~ errr..., ~Sacred~. No, no it says "Secret".

Second Anointing – Including a ceremony. Matches what [/u/anoointedone](#) posted, decades before he talked about his experience. Clearly [/u/anoointedone](#) is a liar because there is evidence he told the truth! errr...something like that.

Seerstones – Oh yes, here is where members should have been reading as well. Details about which seerstones were used and when. Despite science debunking scrying, and [mormonthink giving a condensed version](#) that was accurate, this was anti-mormon until a few days ago. Members should have learned about it here.

True Order of Prayer – Build your own family altar and pray in your home.

There you go, a whole bushel of topics that may someday make it to essays. Things so wacky and easy to disprove that only those who have really shown they have the cognitive bias to ignore all facts are ever supposed to see them.

Fun fact, none of this stuff actually has any kind of "how to test this in reality", but is completely based on scripture and "Some guy said this". If you still believe at all, that appeals to authority should hold weight without evidence and examination, this should convince you otherwise.

In short, if you believe this all, you should believe in "Joseph Smith married other men's wives and teenage daughters at angelic sword point even though Dynastic sealings existed as a method. Christ did the same. By being baptized we can become part of the Abrahamic promise to have our own planets and become God, just like Adam did, as long as we don't sin enough that either we should be killed with gore, or suffer eternal darkness because God loves us. We can even become perfect in this life through a ceremony where our wives wash our feet and be innocent even if we murder people. That is the one, true way to get your own universe to repeat the cycle. Women have the priesthood too, but shhh, don't tell them until they are washing your feet. Everyone can know this stuff when the church takes over the earth, probably after doomsday. And that's why missionaries are not supposed to lead with this stuff, but wait until people are properly prepared to accept such amazing "truths".

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: N is for...

[Nehor](#), who is not the same as [Nahor](#) Brother of Abraham in the bible, but instead the [LDS scriptures give this description of him](#):

n. Nehor was one of the first to practice priestcraft among the Nephites. After teaching false doctrine and killing Gideon, Nehor was executed for his crimes (Alma 1). Nehor's followers continued his evil practices and teachings long after Nehor died.

Also he either [loved silly hats](#) or had a [night job as a lounge singer](#) according to the Lazy, totally non-correlated artists hired by the church to draw things they have given no instruction about what to draw.

To understand how evil Nehor was, we need to understand what priestcraft is; as that is his primary crime cited throughout the Book of Mormon, while the crime he is actually killed for, being manslaughter of a war-hero named Gideon.

[The story](#) made understandable for youngsters with illustrations includes concepts such as "Killing people who disagree with you" and "forced confessions are valid" and "rich people mock those who believe differently."

Something that is never, ever discussed is that Gideon is a war-hero who contends with Nehor's belief system sharply:

he met a man who belonged to the church of God, yea, even one of their teachers; and he began to contend with him sharply, that he might lead away the people of the church; but the man withstood him, admonishing him with the words of God.

Now the history is written by the victor, and that should always be kept in mind when one is reading a text that purports to be historical. Could it be that Gideon, a man who lived by the sword and overthrew the previous monarch that was over him by personal violence, actually struck the first blow (Albeit he is old, but we do see [old people sometimes driven to extremes when they get frustrated](#))? Do we have multiple witnesses coming forward? Can we reconstruct what really happened? No. We are told the evil man did evil things and he is justly punished for the evil things, but even in the trial, Alma is more concerned about the priestcraft (the murder is a minor footnote in the discussion) indicating that he may be biased as a judge.

Now, let's talk about the Evils of "Priestcraft", or making money on the Word of God.

[The Guide to the scriptures defines priestcraft](#) as:

Men preaching and setting themselves up for a light to the world that they may get gain and praise of the world; they do not seek the welfare of Zion

It then cites scriptures about not teaching for money.

The basics of this translate to "if someone gets money for teaching or preaching it is bad, if they attempt to enforce this belief by armed conflict, it is worthy of death."

A short list of times this occurred in the church:

Joseph Smith Jr. plans to Publish and sell the Book of Mormon as a for-profit venture (\$8,000 or [\\$199,854 in today's currency](#)). (Bushman, Rough Stone Rolling (RSR) p47, 63)

[Joseph incurred debts of \\$73,000 attributed to the church](#) on his general store for-profit venture.

Kirtland Safety Society was created with a prophesy that it would succeed. This is a mix of using prophetic power for monetary gain.

Joseph took out two \$25,000 mortgages against the church's future income, not including fees. These would be payable in 10 and 20 years respectively, with a \$3,000 interest payment per year until maturity. Joseph urged other members to sell their property to pay for it. (RSR, p31, 430-431)

Maid of Iowa (Nauvoo) steamboat was purchased by the church for \$4,000 in Joseph's name. Half of these shares were gifted to Emma by Clayton after Joseph's death as an inheritance. (RSR, p 496)

By 1842 Joseph was in debt \$73,066 ([\\$2 million in today's currency](#)) [Federal investigators realize that he is using church money and his own money interchangeably](#).

Joseph opened a hotel and later bar out of his mansion. He had used [church funds to build the mansion by revelation](#), expand his current house, and add a bar for his friend Porter in the lobby. He used church funds to support lavish parties.

January 1845 – [The Twelve voted to exempt themselves from tithing](#) and by 1851, excommunication became the punishment for members not paying.

Patriarchs charge for blessings: "In 1835 the Presiding Patriarch was authorized a salary of \$10 a week, plus expenses. Both the Presiding Patriarch and local stake patriarchs charged a fee. In the 1840s the fee was \$1 per patriarchal blessing at Nauvoo; by the end of the nineteenth century it had increased to \$2 per blessing. Joseph Smith, Sr., gave patriarchal blessings without payment of a fee, but would not record them. 'Uncle' John Smith commented that he "lived very poor ever since we left Kirtland Ohio" (from January 1838 until January 1844). Then his nephew, Joseph Smith, ordained him a patriarch 'through which office I obtained a comfortable living.' "....Patriarchal blessing fees ended in 1902, although patriarchs were allowed to accept unsolicited donations. Not until 1943 did church authorities prohibit patriarchs from accepting gratuities for giving blessings."

"Financial incentive is another explanation for the fact that individual Mormons received more than one patriarchal blessing in the 19th century, often at the invitation of the patriarch. In October 1877 John Taylor criticized the monetary motivation of some stake patriarchs. He said they were using their patriarchal office as 'a mere means of obtaining a livelihood, and to obtain more business they had been traveling from door to door and underbidding each other in the price of blessings.'
(D. Michael Quinn, "[The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power](#)," Chap 6, Signature Books, 1997.)

Extra-legal activities covered by consecrated funds

[George Q. Cannon bailed out of prison](#).

Church run Sugar Company fails (\$180,000 in 1889 currency or about \$4.4Million in today's currency of tithing used to bail it out).

Heber J. Grant begs for donations and buying interest in UT&L bank, a bank that would have gone under for illegal practices and not having enough money, except that if it had it would have sent most of the brethren to jail. The church would eventually throw \$50,000 at this bank (\$1.5 million); but in the meantime Heber was to raise \$75,000 by pushing the worthless stock and asking for donations from wealthy members. Most members contribute because he gives them apostolic blessings for donating.

Modern day demands and uses for money that enrich the preacher after the preaching

In 1900, the lack of money-for-preaching led Lorenzo Snow to commission a list of non-tithe payers in all stakes. "Snow told the apostles that non-payment of tithing 'was worse than the non-observance of the Word of Wisdom.'"

Henry D. Moyle spends 15 million by 1959 driving the church into 8 million in debt when the church stops reporting its financing numbers publicly. Henry D. Moyle would found the Property Reserve Inc. for-profit real-estate investment arm of the church that now builds high-rises, and owns 2% of Florida.

Ezra Taft Benson asks members to pay two or three times for each copy of the Book of Mormon in order to solve a logistics error.

The Prophets and Apostles when called sit as the board of directors on numerous companies. They are paid for their time and contribution in each with at least stock. One cannot be an apostle without also sitting on the boards of these companies.

Church builds a for-profit Mall for about \$1.7-2 Billion dollars.

Beneficial Life is bailed out about \$600 Million dollars.

Half of Tithing in New Zealand, where the church is forced to report financial numbers, goes to "Salaries"

GA's income *Note, even bishops were part of Priestcraft early on:*

In 1884 Church president John Taylor limited bishops to 8% of tithing they collected (now primarily cash), while stake presidents got 2% of tithing collected by all the bishops of the stake. In 1888 Wilford Woodruff established set salaries for stake presidents and provided that a stake committee would apportion 10% of collected tithing between the bishops and the stake tithing clerk. At April 1896 General Conference, the First Presidency announced the end of salaries for local officers, in response to the decision of the temple meeting 'to not pay Salaries to anyone but the Twelve.'" (Michael Quinn, Extensions of Power)

Mission Presidents make at LEAST \$100,000 a year with common reports being north of \$300,000 in COMPENSATION. It's not a salary if you are reimbursed, so they can claim it isn't salary. But it is Compensation for their time

The Prophet a.k.a. Profit gets a \$Million+ Home (Salt Lake Tribune, Dec. 8, 1988, we read "The \$1.2 million condominium at 40 N. State that is home to the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be exempt from property taxes, Salt Lake County commissioners ruled Tuesday.")

Steven Benson, Grandson of the President Benson said [a modest living allowance] is 70% of what [a general authority] was making prior to becoming a general authority.

In addition to that, all of the quorum of the twelve's children get free educations at BYU:
<http://mormonstalk.wordpress.com/2007/12/01/byu-has-no-entrance-requirements-for-gas-kids/>

The Book Deals

Imagine that you want to make it big as an author. How much could you expect to make? How much would it cost you? For General Authorities, it works like this.

One can write the book, or have it ghost-written on one's behalf leveraging one of the many employees at the COB. Once the book is written, the LDS church has Deseret Book print the GA's prolific words, to stock its shelves. However, the Deseret Book runs at a loss and has for a long time. So the Church will buy Deseret Book Stock (it being a private company, watered-down stock doesn't really impact its operations) equal to the unsold books, using tithing funds. Deseret Book tries to sell as many books as possible, but it is theoretically possible that a GA could write a book that didn't sell a single copy; and the church would still hand Deseret Book \$100,000 for the run. The General Authority would then keep a percent (sometimes as high as 70%, but reasonably in the 30-40% range), or about \$30-70,000 back to the GA for a book no one purchased. Deseret Book does not have the right to deny the book (after all, these GA's have bailed them out of their profit-less state time and again), meaning that a GA could reasonably fill a book with [Lorem Ipsum](#) text never sell a copy, and walk away with \$30,000-70,000 in tithing money as a personal bonus. Yet somehow this is not seen as "Salary", so again I would say it is "Compensation" which still fits under the definition of Priestcraft.

Conclusion

Nehor was just a peanut operation compared to the long sullied history of 'preaching for profit' that occurs in the LDS church. Note that without enforcing it by the sword, the death sentence might be a bit harsh, but one could see the Nauvoo-legion, Zion's camp, The Utah War and other activities as attempting to enforce priestcraft by the sword.

Regardless, Nehor is a fascinating character because he condemns the religion so very heavily. From Joseph to the building of the Mall, Nehor's ghost seems to linger between the mortar of every building the Church constructs whispering "You can buy anything in this world with money, mingled with scripture".

ABC'S of Science and Exmormonism: O is for...

Olmecs. Whenever FARMS, The Maxwell Institute, or FAIR want to talk about evidence for Jaredites, they turn to the Olmecs. Their strategy involves most people having no idea how poorly a fit this group is.

They have one feature in their favor, the culture starts at about 2,500 BC, which is roughly when the tower of babel is thought to have occurred, assuming it happened at all.

And it is a major issue with those who believe in the Hopewell Indians as the Nephites, as there are no matching civilizations to be Jaredites.

But after that, the Olmecs have behaviors that don't match the Book of Mormon narrative.

For example, no steel swords, no gold working, and perhaps more significantly, they played Mayan Ball.

"**Mayan Ball?**" you may be asking, and it's a good question because it is very clear that the Olmecs influenced Mayan culture, as they originally developed a game that was so key to Mayan culture, that it was attributed to them.

The Jaredites all died save Coriatumr, who could not smoothly communicate, so the likelihood he pushed hard to teach a sport is very suspect.

Another issue is that the start of the civilization matching the Tower of Babel is forced. The beginnings of Olmec civilization have traditionally been placed between 1400 and 1200 BCE, and they actually have roots traceable to 5000 B.C. in North America. That's a huge glaring hole for the Jaredite narrative.

The Olmecs also vanished suddenly, which FARMS pinned its hopes on, however now according to archaeologists, this depopulation was probably the result of "very serious environmental changes that rendered the region unsuited for large groups of farmers".

No massive battles of extermination exist outside BYU Studies publications. The second theory involves a massive catastrophe with volcanoes... pity the BoM left that out of Ether

Also, in an awkward turn, they may have invented the compass, meaning that they had the compass, when Nephi and Lehi would not have.

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: P is for...

Priesthood (And polygamy as the two are connected). Priesthood is absolutely central to the claims of the church. Without it there is no need for restoration, no particular authority compared to any other religion. Joseph is just a backwoods visionary with claims like so many of his day.

Which is, perhaps why it is so odd that the restoration of the priesthood was not mentioned until 1834, about 4 years after the church was formed, and 5 years after the events were supposed to have occurred.

The Official Story is that while translating the Book of Mormon and reading about baptism, Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith suddenly feeling the need for baptism, head off to the woods and are met by John the Baptist, once beheaded by Herod, who promptly baptizes them on May 15th 1829.

He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter...The messenger who visited us on this occasion and conferred this Priesthood upon us, said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament, and that he acted under the direction of Peter, James and John, who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which Priesthood, he said, would in due time be conferred on us...It was on the fifteenth day of May, 1829, that we were ordained under the hand of this messenger, and baptized - (Joseph Smith History 1:70-72)

Issues with the official story

For one thing, John the Baptist was just there for show, as they could have been baptized by just the [Holy Ghost as Adam was in the P. of G.P.](#)

But the mention of John not having the priesthood to give the Holy Ghost should be alarming immediately, because v. 73, Joseph said, "no sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery, than the Holy Ghost fell upon him—something is probably wrong there.

In addition, Joseph didn't mention a separate priesthood until much later. Many of the early elders had to be re-ordained to the Melchizedek priesthood as elders were originally part of the Aaronic priesthood. Wilford Woodruff, was an Elder in the Aaronic Priesthood until 18, May 1836 when he was made a Seventy. (Kenny, Scott (editor), Wilford Woodruff's Journals 1833-1898, Chronology Signature Books, Midvale, Utah)).

3 June 1831: "The authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood was manifested and conferred for the first time upon several of the Elders." History of the Church, 1:175-76. But Joseph and Oliver were declared the First and Second Elder in 1830.

William Smith provides context on the day:

William Smith's account of the conference which followed at Orange, Ohio, 25 October 1831 "where Elders, Priests, Teachers, and Deacons received some general instructions from the leaders of the church concerning the priesthood of Melchisedec, to which they had not as yet been ordained." (W. Smith, William Smith on Mormonism, 19-20.)

So why would there be confusion about offices in the priesthood and rolls and duties. Well, the record itself does not mention Peter, James, and John in the revelation about the priesthood in the original 1833 Book of

Commandments (predecessor of the D&C). They first appeared in the D&C in 1835 (Book of Commandments Chapter 28 and D&D 27 differ by 13 verses)

David Whitmer, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, talked about Joseph Smith altering and backdating revelations as part of his reason for leaving Joseph's branch of Mormonism in his [An Address to All Believers in Christ](#).

Some of the revelations as they now appear in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants have been changed and added to changed and added to. Some of the changes being the greatest importance as the meaning is entirely changed on some very important matters; as if the Lord had changed his mind a few years after he gave the revelations...The revelations were printed in the Book of Commandments correctly. This I know, and will prove it to you.

These revelations were arranged for publication by Brothers Joseph Smith, Sydney Rigdon, Orson Hyde and others, in Hiram, Ohio, while I was there, were sent to Independence to be published, and were printed just exactly as they were arranged by Brother Joseph and the others. And when the Book of Commandments was printed, Joseph and the church received it as being printed correctly. (An Address to all Believers in Christ, by David Whitmer, page 56)

BYU papers discuss the topic:

Two editions of this work were published, the first in 1833, and the second in 1835. Great inconsistencies [sic] exist between several parts of the book and the editions of 1833 and 1835 are in several respects repugnant to each other. (The Prophet of the Nineteenth Century, pp. 79-80 as quoted in "A Study of the Nature of and Significance of the Changes in the Revelations as Found in a Comparison of the Book of Commandments and Subsequent Editions of the Doctrine and Covenants," Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1955, typed copy, page 126)

So it was a timing issue, and some of the revelations were backdated...why does that matter?

It might just be clerical error. It could very well be non-important. However, I want to put it in terms of a driver's license:

Each time the church teaches these lessons, it teaches that the authority from god was clear and concrete without an expiration date. Missionaries commonly use driver's licenses as an example of "Authority" when teaching investigators and new members. Joseph's alteration of dates and revelations from the Book of Commandments to what now exists in the D&C is similar to changing the expiration date on a driver's license.

The lack of any historical record of the Melchizedek priesthood is like a driver's license with no date of issue attached. The ordination of elders while only having the Aaronic would be like driving Big Rigs around with a motorcycle license.

Would a police officer accept a manual date alteration on a driver's license? Wouldn't one want to know that the authority (the state that issued it in the case of the license, and God in the case of the Priesthood) granted the extension or further rights and privileges claimed on the license?

It is all fine to claim authority, but when the dates, names, and circumstances around that authority are all suspect, it should cause individuals to question more about that authority, not simply accept it as valid.

Joseph and Oliver re-writing the revelations is similar to many other power plays in organizations all over the world, and David Whitmer was correct in calling them on such an alteration.

Polygamy and Priesthood Power

This is all very important in the claims of Joseph regarding polygamy. You see in 1832, Emma Smith caught Joseph and Fanny having a "Transaction". The date Nov 6, 1832 was given by William McClellan who talked to Emma directly. Levi Hancock backs up the year as 1832, and Martin Harris states it was in or about 1833 (November 1832 being 'about 1833').

By 1835, Benjamin Johnson is on record as talking publicly about Fanny Alger, so it clearly happened before 1835.

And what is the problem? Well the sealing powers of the priesthood weren't restored to the [Kirtland temple until April 3, 1836](#) which means when Joseph and Fanny were getting it on, they were not sealed together.

In face, Eliza Jane Churchill Web and Eliza R. Snow both mention the plural marriage (and have a record of it) in 1836:

Alger, Fanny, Joseph Smith's wife. One of the first wives Joseph married. Emma made such a fuss about. Sister E. R. Snow was well acquainted with her as she lived with the Prophet at the time.

Dates matter. It means that Fanny Alger was not a plural wife until long after Joseph was busted, and publicly discussed as having had sex with her. There was no sealing power to have her as a plural wife. The other 32+ wives and claims of "drawn swords" or intense pressure (24 hours to decide to marry him) should be formed with this backdrop of priesthood and deception in mind. As the apologists love to remind us, we should keep these things "in context".

This puts together the two "P"'s (Polygamy and Priesthood) as a means for members to really take inventory, because, if you note, this is the same time the Melchizedek priesthood is suddenly mentioned; it is the same time Benjamine Johnson is spreading rumors and Joseph and Fanny, and the same time David Whitmer is talking about Joseph changing revelations and David is so upset he is splitting off his own church, it is the same time Joseph is finding "relief" in his housemaid, a 16 year old (in 1832).

Add to it that we can look at [medicare.gov](#) for the hospitals in the area of the Wasatch Front and see that recovery rates are not better in Utah than the rest of the world despite a higher priesthood-per-capita than anywhere in the world and I think we have a pretty damning case that priesthood is ineffectual and perhaps not based in reality at all.

Conclusion

This whole creation of a new priesthood without mention during a time Joseph was undertaking to cover his sins, and gratify his... well, pride and vain ambitions (as well as his lust), should cause individuals to hesitate before stating firmly that they have a knowledge of the priesthood restoration. Individual testimonies of priesthood blessings should only be considered in the context of overarching statistics and what that leaves us with is a firm case that has been an "Ex-LDS" position since David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses, left the church in 1835.

The restoration priesthood is not a mark in favor of the church, but has been an exmormon strong point since the first decade of the church's inception and within 5 years of the printing of the Book of Mormon, people were leaving the church over the twisted tales and history:

More information consider the following:

https://www.reddit.com/r/exmormon/comments/1b70lf/exploring_mormon_institute_lesson_18_establish_a/

https://www.reddit.com/r/exmormon/comments/174v8u/exploring_mormon_institute_dc_2013_day_8_the/

https://www.reddit.com/r/exmormon/comments/1zxwt1/power_of_priesthood_blessings_and_hospital_results/

http://www.i4m.com/think/polygamy/JS_Polygamy_Timeline.htm

<http://exmormon.org/d6/drupal/Joseph-Smith-and-Fanny-Alger>

<http://www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/changingtherevelations.htm>

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: Q is for...

Quetzalcoatl, a Mesoamerican deity whose name comes from the Nahuatl language and means "feathered serpent".

Why would we care about a Mayan deity? Well, let's quote "John Taylor"

The story of the life of the Mexican divinity, Quetzalcoatl, closely resembles that of the Savior; so closely, indeed, that **we can come to no other conclusion than that Quetzalcoatl and Christ are the same being**. But the history of the former has been handed down to us through an impure Lamanitish source, which has sadly disfigured and perverted the original incidents and teachings of the Savior's life and ministry." (Mediation and Atonement, p. 194.)

What's that sound? Oh that's the sound of the Apologist Bus come to throw John Taylor (Apostle and prophet) under itself:

It is claimed that LDS scholars believe that Quetzalcoatl was Jesus Christ. However, since Quetzalcoatl's association with a "feathered serpent" constitutes "snake worship," some Christians claim that this association is therefore inconsistent with worship of Jesus Christ. Some LDS authors have seen Christian parallels to Quetzalcoatl...**Quetzalcoatl plays a minor—if any—role in modern LDS apologetics...Whether Quetzalcoatl can tell us anything about the Book of Mormon, however, remains unproven.**http://en.fairmormon.org/Jesus_Christ/Relationship_to_Quetzalcoatl

That's a bunch of guys on the internet telling everyone that a past prophet plays a minor role, if any, in modern apologetics; as well as taking his "no other conclusion" and presto it becomes "unproven".

Can't they just print "John Taylor was wrong"?

So at what point did Apologists distance themselves from prophetic statements on the feathered serpent? An article by Brant Gardner in Sunstone:

A few years ago, while reading some of Dr. Michael Coes' books, I came to the conclusion that what I had learned and taught about Quetzalcoatl, presumably "The Great White God" of meso-America, was Jesus of Nazareth, was wrong. --Mike Barker, introduction to Brant's work on Rational Faiths <http://rationalfaiths.com/quetzalcoatl-white-god-and-the-book-of-mormon-part-i/>

Brant's Sunstone article was published in 1986. So the thought that the Mesoamerican feathered serpent was Jesus Christ only existed for 150 years of LDS history. No biggie to toss it to the side.

[Mind you, that won't stop the determined apologist, Jeff Lindsay, from still publishing similarities based on the same line of thinking in July of 2002](#)

My personal moment of realizing how bad it would be to identify Christ with Quetzalcoatl came from Star Trek. [A video game pin the 80's and 90's featured him as an alien](#). Captain Kirk, in the game, told him of the Aztec violent culture after his departure,

Being disappointed of his own work and his failures, Quetzalcoatl asked Doctor Leonard McCoy to remove his essential gland. Quetzalcoatl and the party were transported on the Enterprise and McCoy surgically removed the gland, turning him into a mortal in the process.

The message in the game was clear. Quetzalcoatl's failures were so great, and so devastating, that he shouldn't be a deity. I remember putting the game down after that one, and being distracted the rest of the next day at school. I talked to my friends about it, and it suddenly struck me how evil this "God" had been.

The game, published in 1992, was just a skip behind the 1986 Sunstone article and my opinion was turned about the same time the apologists were coming to grips with the difference from what they imagined the Aztec God to be, and what the realities were. My Seminary teacher still taught the connection 3 years later in 1995 as though it were doctrine.

Regardless, the adoption of a failure God as a type of Christ goes back to early Church Leaders, and is so scientifically and resoundingly researched at this point that current apologists distance themselves heavily from being associated with the thought and they are willing to toss prophets overboard to keep the ship of Zion afloat.

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: R is for...

Restoration. First of all, the idea of a "restoration" is not unique to the LDS. The other thing that one must understand is that the "Great Apostasy" goes *hand in hand*—in that one must prove another church (the Catholic church) false—in order to state their needs to be a restoration.

So first of all, when was the great apostasy? According to this article, which uses an early Christian writer, Eusebius, it was sometime after 260 A.D. and He died in 339 or 340 so it has to fall within that timeframe.

This is when the Emperor Constantine was baptized.

That LDS.org would quote Eusebius is not a lucky chance. He is, in fact, the source for the thought that there was one central church. He simply deemed everything else as "Heresy".

An example might help illustrate the degree to which the retrospective and biased view of history can actually obscure earlier events. This is from Henry Chadwick's classic *The Early Church* (Penguin Books, 1967).

The Jewish Christians, excluded by their fellow-countrymen, continued to observe Sabbaths, circumcision, and other Jewish feasts. As this distressed many Gentile Christians, they became lonely, unsupported groups...From Irenaeus onwards Jewish Christianity is treated as a deviationist sect rather than as a form of Christianity with the best claims to continuity with the practice of the primitive church at Jerusalem. The Jewish Christians called themselves Ebionites, a name derives from the Hebrew word meaning "the poor"...Since some of them had never accepted the tradition of the virgin birth of Christ, Irenaeus classified the Ebionites with other heresies that denied this; soon Tertullian was supposing that they originated with a person named Ebion, and later anti-heretical writers even felt able to quote from Ebion's alleged writings.

<http://timesandseasons.org/index.php/2012/02/the-not-so-great-apostasy/>

In fact, many early Christian writings, prior to 260 A.D. say things like *infant baptism*, something that Mormon and Moroni are pretty firm are not part of the "true church".

It turns out the whole narrative of a "Great Apostasy" is flawed:

Scholarship in the 20th century suggests that the original condition of Christianity in the decades following Christ's death — the very beginning of the early church — was not any sort of essential unity but instead was radically diverse. In other words, there never was an early Christian Church, there were, at the very beginning, many different churches (and yes, I recognize that the term "church" is somewhat anachronistic in this early context, but that is sort of the point). Bart Ehrman makes the case for early Christian diversity in his book *Lost Christianities: The Battle for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (OUP, 2003).

- Prior to the later 3rd century, there were many competing *Christian* groups with a wide range of beliefs and practices.
- The term "proto-orthodoxy" refers to those early Christians who held views that eventually (in the late 3rd century) pushed out competing Christian practices and doctrines.
- Older historians simply assumed that the orthodox view (held by the proto-orthodox) had always, even from the earliest period following the death of Jesus Christ, been the dominant one. They were wrong. <http://timesandseasons.org/index.php/2012/02/the-not-so-great-apostasy/>

In fact, the concept of what "The Great Apostasy" means to [LDS Mormons developed over time](#) [/u/Nocoolnametom](#) knows a lot more about particulars regarding New Testament and early Christian issues that just don't jive with modern LDS thought, and I'll refer you to his blog for issues like:

[Translation issues in the JST](#)

[A general discussion of this idea and how it falls flat](#) as well as a podcast I did with him on [Mormon Expositor](#) [on this subject](#)

This is a foundational piece of Mormon doctrine. If there was no Great Apostasy, there is no need for a restoration. Current research clearly illustrates the lack of a great apostasy. This has been a point that Catholics have argued with the LDS clearly back to the 1950's very loudly, but I would bet it goes all the way back to the beginning.

The Restoration, itself, bespeaks that history is contrary to key Mormon thought.

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: S is for...

Smiths. That's right, from the very beginning; long before there was a Book of Mormon to debate, people had issues with the family God would wait roughly 1500 years to be "prepared" properly before communicating again to man. Throughout reading this, one should keep in mind other possible families God could have communicated to throughout this period such as:

- [Martin Luther](#) – Who prayed and beseeched God for answers, and was willing to sacrifice everything in order to go against the doctrines of the Catholic church.
- William Tyndale – Who died putting the Bible into the common tongue. Most Mormons will know him as the man who said "[I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scripture than thou doest.](#)" as a sort of preparation for Joseph Smith Jr., but the question should be asked; why not publish the Book of Mormon at the same time? Remember, the current Essay points out translation was possible without the plates, so them not being on the same continent is irrelevant.
- [Ellen G. White](#) – Whose writings would spread to more continents and more languages faster with more members than the Book of Mormon, if God had combined forces with her; it's very likely the church would be over 15 million members today. I know that the standard position of the church is that anyone who produces scripture other than Joseph is "of the devil" or a copycat of God's plan, so let's look at her life and how she dealt with persecution.
- [Laura Ingalls Wilder](#) – Certainly better at writing about contemporary issues, her books are still read throughout the world and were turned into a TV series. She also lived in Independence, Missouri for a time and wrote about devote religious beliefs. Ma and Pa would certainly have supported her in fetching the plates.
- [Alexander Campbell](#) – A man with a massive following, he already espoused and taught much of the same doctrines found in the Book of Mormon, curiously. He also taught revolutionary ideas that bucked common faith, and he had Sidney Rigdon as a close compatriot. Are we to believe that this man would not have listened to an angel from God on minor doctrinal points when he believed so much of the same doctrines already?
- [Mary Seacole](#) – Who would lose her entire home and family to sickness and fire; and then be rejected by Florence Nightingale and fund her own way to support troops in Crimea.
- Any number of other religious movements that formed during this period in the very same region; the [Burned Over District](#).
- Or others that we still know today
 - The Cochranites had polygamy,
 - The Oneida Community would form a decade later with polygamy
 - The Icarians would have all things in common and move into Nauvoo after Brigham left as the setup was ideal for their similar ideology
 - The Jehovah's Witnesses would be founded after Smith but before Brigham died
 - [The Baha'i](#) also started in 1830, had a new book of scripture, an Oliver Cowdery figure named "the Bab" and have been persecuted (far more than the Mormons as they have had at least one Martyr every year since 1830!).

We are to believe that all of these dedicated, God-seeking, similar doctrines that earned them persecution and similar sects, off-shoots or reformations were all devil-led while the Smith's were the perfect family for the Restoration? Not only that, but there was no similar family for 1500 years that could have done the job as well?

{Note: I'm not going to address the legal situation required for the "Restoration" of the gospel, and how the United States was more idyllic as laws were looser for religions. It's a post of its own. For this discussion let's

just mention the sheer number of extra-legal activities by the church such as [Polygamy in Nauvoo](#) and Kirtland, the illegal Kirtland Banking Society (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirtland_Safety_Society), Joseph Smith's setup of Nauvoo's legal structure that made it a den of refuge for those who killed, murdered, raped, etc. as one could escape the law there as evidence that if God supported Joseph, extra-legal dealings for the restoration weren't really a concern. One might say that other countries would have hunted him down to prevent the church from forming with military might; but as several "Mobs" in Mormon history were actually militias, the same actually happened in the U.S. As such, I don't think "The Restoration could only happen in the United States" really is a strong argument.}

The Smiths:

Father Smith – Smith tried his hands at several professions, including farmer, teacher, and shop-keeper, none of which proved very successful. He moved his family to Palmyra, New York in 1816 and began to make payments on a farm located on the edge of neighboring Manchester Township. He was raised to the degree of Master Freemason on May 7, 1818, in Ontario Lodge No. 23 of Canandaigua, New York. In the Palmyra–Manchester area, Smith and his sons were involved in a number of treasure digging excavations in the 1820s.

Work on a frame house at the farm was halted by the unexpected death of Smith's eldest son, Alvin, in 1823. Smith subsequently failed to make payments on the farm. Lemuel Durfee purchased it as a favor to the family and allowed the Smiths to continue there as renters through 1830

Though a spiritual man, Smith showed little interest in organized religion and was content to allow his wife control over the religious upbringing of their children. This indifference bothered Lucy very much. After much prayer, she said she had received a divine witness that her husband would someday accept "the pure and undefiled Gospel of the Son of God.

The Smith family while living in Palmyra and Manchester are said (1) to have been lazy, shiftless, intemperate and untruthful; (2) to have opened a "shop" in Palmyra where they sold cakes, pies, root beer, and the like; and that on public occasions, such as the Fourth of July, militia training days, and election days, the elder Smith would load a rude hand-cart, made by himself, with these wares and sally forth to find such patronage as might come to hand; (3) to have been dishonest and guilty of stealing from their neighbors. (B. H. Roberts, Comprehensive History of the Church, Vol.1, Ch.4, p.39)

[The Smiths would have been selling "beer" in the 1820's while "root beer" was not invented until 1869! That is the artificially-carbonated, non-alcoholic version of "root beer" as we know it today](#)

Lucy Smith – This shift toward commercialism pushed the father's work farther away from the home, with the result that the mother now took over the father's former role of final responsibility for the children's education and for their moral and religious training (Bloch, 113). Magazines and educational publications heralded mothers as "the chief transmitters of religious and moral values" (Bloch, 101). Mack was proud of her father's involvement in the Revolutionary War. Even though Solomon Mack was not committed to any religious belief system, he certainly appreciated the diligence of his wife in attending to the spiritual and educational needs of their children. "All the flowery eloquence of the pulpit," he said, could not match the influence of his wife on their children (chap. 1).

Mack married Joseph Smith, Sr., in January 1796, bringing a wedding gift of \$1,000 from her brother, Stephen, and his business partner, John Mudgett. Lucy Smith assumed the responsibility for the moral and religious guidance of her children as well as for their secular education.

She had a near death experience with consumption. She vowed that, if her life was spared, she would serve God with all her heart, whereupon she heard a voice advising her, "Seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. Let your heart be comforted; ye believe in God, believe also in me." From that point on, Smith began a long search for a religion that would teach her the way of salvation. In so doing, she was following the precepts of her culture. During this post-revolutionary period, religious speakers constantly emphasized the "cultivation" of female piety so that women might more ably fulfill their role as a "moral mother" (Bloch, 118). The interesting bit is this is all pre-Palmyra days so the Smiths were influenced by all of this by the time the neighbors report about them.

Smith continued to educate her children in secular as well as spiritual matters. **Dr. John Stafford of Palmyra, New York interviewed in 1880, remembered that Smith "had a great deal of faith that their children were going to do something great" and also recalled that Smith taught her ten children from the Bible.**

Smith took the initiative in trying to involve her family in seeking the "true church." In light of Joseph Sr.'s indifference, she sought consolation in prayer that the gospel would be brought to her husband and was reassured by a dream that her husband would be given "the pure and undefiled Gospel of the Son of God" (56). About this time, Joseph Sr. began having dreams with symbolic content that were interpreted as being related to his ambivalence about religious faith. These dreams continued after the family's move to Palmyra, New York, until he had had seven in all; Lucy remembers five well enough to quote in detail.

Alvin Smith – Worked as a carpenter's helper to assist the Smith family in saving up sufficient funds to make a down payment on a farm in Manchester Township; assisted his father in clearing timber, planting wheat and tapping maple trees for the purpose of making maple sugar (Allen, James B; Leonard, Glen M (1992), *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, ISBN 0-87579-565-X.) **took the lead in building the family's new home and worked to get the family out of debt.** Vogel, Dan (ed). *Early Mormon Documents* (Vol. 1). pp. 284–285.

Regarding this debt, Smith's mother Lucy stated, "In the spring [1823] after we moved onto the farm we commenced making Mapel [Maple] sugar ... we then began to make preparations for building a house as the Land Agent of whom we purchased our farm was dead and we could not make the last payment." On November 19, 1823, at age 25, Smith died of mercury poisoning from calomel, which had been administered to cure a case of "bilious colic."

Hyrum Smith – **Attended Dartmouth College in his teens.** This may have been one of the factors behind Dr. Nathan Smith treating Smith's brother Joseph's leg. Also not contributing to finances, but rather costing; but also indication of education in home. More of poor PhDs parents than immigrants.

Sophronia Smith (July 8, 1813) – Not a lot on Sophronia's income at all.

Joseph Smith Jr. – We have stories of him digging wells; but otherwise his only income seems to be that from glass-looking. Young Joseph worked on his family farm and perhaps took an occasional odd job or worked for nearby farmers. His mother described him as "much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of the children, but far more given to meditation and deep study." Lucy Smith also noted that though he never read through the Bible until he was at least eighteen, he was imaginative and could regale the family with "the most amusing recitals" of the life and religion of ancient Native Americans "with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life with them." Smith was variously described as "remarkably quiet," "taciturn," "proverbially good-natured," and "never known to laugh." One acquaintance said Smith had "a jovial, easy, don't-care way about him," and he had an aptitude for debating moral and political issues in a local junior debating club.

[Samuel Smith](#) – Smith's father missed a mortgage payment on the family farm on the outskirts of Manchester Township, near Palmyra, a local Quaker named Lemuel Durfee purchased the land and allowed the Smiths to continue to live there in exchange for Samuel's labor at Durfee's store.

William Smith (March 13, 1811) – 9-13 years old, not a significant financial contributor

Katharine Smith (July 8, 1813) – 7-11 years old, not a significant financial contributor

Don Carlos (March 25, 1816) – 4-6 years old, not a significant financial contributor

Lucy Smith (July 18, 1821) – born after the date for the 1838 version of the first vision; to 3 years old.
Not a significant financial contributor

Situation prior to the Restoration

Rough Stone Rolling handles this period excellently and I highly recommend it. I'm just going to summarize:

Joseph Smith Sr. (Father Smith) had invested about \$2,000, he received from an inheritance into a scam. They lost it all and he never quite recovered. Prone to get-rich-quick schemes he did work, including maple sugar from trees and brewing a fermented root beer ("Not your Father's Root Beer" is supposed to be close, but actual root beer wasn't invented until the 1860's so anything described as root beer here is beer made from roots. Got that?)

[They lived in Vermont until a crop failure forced them to relocate.](#) This led my Seminary teacher to speculate that the crop failure was divine in origin, forcing them to move closer to where the plates were buried (which plates would not be used in the translation process according to the recent Essay, remember).

The crop failure wasn't just the Smith's own fields, and shouldn't be taken as a sign of "lack of industry" for most farmer's crops failed that year due to the climate altering. What altered the climate? A volcano a half a world away; [Edit: Tambora] had exploded altering the weather patterns. Unusual crop failures, snows, and weather-induced deaths are recorded around the world at this time. To imply that God would control volcanoes causing deaths by freezing around the world rather than communicate via an angel directly to Father Smith says volumes about both God's character and the lack of receptiveness of the divine in the Smith home...or accepting the random factors that led Joseph to be in Palmyra in 1820-24 were not divinely inspired also communicates a lot about the Nature of God and how the Smiths were very lucky indeed to end up with the plates in their backyard. Why, they even looked at other locations than Palmyra to move to after the crop failure.

Alvin really did the hard work – we're about to review a whole set of comments of the citizens of Palmyra and the neighbors of the Smiths on whether they had a good work ethic. We're going to see a very conflicted set of statements in which the Smiths are both called industrious but poor; as well as lazy.

FAIRMormon attempts to prove the Smiths were ideal in industry and that the lazy reports were just sourpusses or the devil's attempt to discredit the Smith's.

I propose a different solution:

[The Smiths were like Mexican Immigrants portrayed by the Republican Party](#) – The Smiths did very low-skill high labor work. Dig a wells. Harvest maple sugar. Fix the thing. Sell popcorn and beer.

In the same way I hear Utah/Idaho republicans frequently talking about Mexicans being lazy, simply sapping off resources from Food Stamps, health care, and other government programs while at the same time accusing them of "Taking our jobs", I think the Smith's neighbors accuse them of both taking up all the work in the area; while being lazy.

Hence the curious case of them being industrious and lazy at the same time is explained through common human behavior when viewing unskilled labor; and no need to have the devil brought into the explanation. Just picture some illegal Mexican family in the ward boundaries and how the ward members might talk; and I think you get a pretty good feel for how the neighborhood statements should be read.

Financial situation of the Smiths

FAIRMormon states:

Given the financial difficulties under which the Smith family labored, it would hardly be surprising that they might hope for such a reversal in their fortunes. Richard Bushman has compared the Smith's attitude toward treasure digging with a modern attitudes toward gambling, or buying a lottery ticket. Bushman points out that looking for treasure had little stigma attached to it among all classes in the 17th century, and continued to be respectable among the lower classes into the 18th and 19th.

I think this is a fair statement to make; and not inaccurate. However I want you to think about background checks currently conducted. One of the things that companies and the Government look into (heavily) is the indebtedness and poverty level of individuals in key positions? Why? Because those individuals would be easier to manipulate or turn over key secrets for money. *One must account for why God would look for people essentially buying lottery tickets as their best hope for a financial future, as the only family in 1500 years He could work with to bring about the restoration.*

{Note on money digging as an activity being a credible source of income: The local newspapers reported on "money digging" activities:

- "digging for money hid in the earth is a very common thing and in this state it is even considered as honorable and profitable employment"
- "One gentleman...digging...ten to twelve years, found a sufficient quantity of money to build him a commodious house.
- "another...dug up...fifty thousand dollars!"
- And, in 1825 the Wayne Sentinel in Palmyra reported that buried treasure had been found "by the help of a mineral stone, (which becomes transparent when placed in a hat and the light excluded by the face of him who looks into it)."

Although these claims are clearly not true in hindsight ("I don't know of a single account of anyone actually turning up something of any value"(<http://mormonheretic.org/2012/06/12/treasure-digging-in-the-1800s/>)) - Richard Bushman in interview with John Dehlin), the gullible of the area in that time could easily be understood as suckered in by such claims. These are, for lack of a better comparison, the "Nigerian Prince" emails of Joseph Smith's day, and Joseph Smith Jr. would play the part of the scammer, taking small payments with a promise of a large payout after those initial payments are made.}

FAIRMormon attempts to prove the Smiths were industrious through economic value added to the property they were renting. I think this is a good attempt at bringing hard numbers to the debate.

However; they look at rate of increase as the measure. The property they were on was not highly valued when they rented it and that should be kept in mind. Adding the frame house does show industry; however and shouldn't be ignored. Alvin, again, did a lion's share of that effort. For more on the rental contract, and how they improved land that wasn't theirs to keep up with the neighbors see Rough Stone Rolling's first chapter.

Let's return to our Metaphor: Imagine that the Mexican Family in the ward boundaries moving into a rented duplex, and building a two story house for themselves, without permission in the backyard of the rental. The landlord shows up surprised that there is a house on his property. He then demands back rent; and the family refuses to pay the back rent as they used their rent-money to buy the materials for the house they built. He offers to let one of their kids work in his store to pay off some of the back-rent; and when they still don't pay he throws them out for not paying rent and keeps the property.

One can see how "improvements to land" do show some industry, but they might still come off as selfish, not very bright in how they did their industry, etc.

Palmyra Statements about the Smiths

Orlando Saunders, stated that the members of the Smith family "have all worked for me many a day; they were very good people.

The Hurlburt affidavits in Mormonism Unveiled are the primary claims for the Smith family being lazy

The Manchester residents; 11 neighbors of the Smith's signed the following:

We, the undersigned, being personally acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, sen. with whom the celebrated Gold Bible, so called, originated, state: that they were not only a lazy, indolent set of men, but also intemperate; and their word was not to be depended upon; and that we are truly glad to dispense with their society (Howe 1834, p. 262).

Peter Ingersoll – was one of these residents:

- Claimed that the Smith family's general employment was "digging for money."
- Claimed that Joseph Smith, Sr. taught him to use a divining rod.
- Claimed that Joseph Smith, Sr. and Alvin Smith used a stone in a hat to see things.
- Claimed that Joseph Smith, Sr., was engaged in "divination"
- Claimed that Joseph Smith, Jr. admitted to his father-in-law that he only pretended to be able to see things in the stone
- Claimed that Joseph Smith, Jr. fooled his family into thinking that a frock full of sand was the "Gold Bible"
- Claimed that Joseph told his family that nobody could see the "Gold Bible" and live
- Claimed that Joseph made up the story of the gold plates on the spot, after which he is supposed to have said, "I have got the damned fools fixed, and will carry out the fun." Claimed that Joseph told him that "he had no such book, and believed there never was any such book"
- Claimed that Joseph Smith, Sr. said that there had been a book found in a hollow tree in Canada that described the "first settlement of this country before it was discovered by Columbus"

[Willard Chase](#) – A friend of Joseph Smith. "the most vigorous of the Manchester treasure-seekers" as well at a Methodist class leader (Rough Stone Rolling, page 50)

Chase only cares that he was involved in finding the Seer stone and doesn't comment of Joseph's work ethic

[Isaac Hale](#) – Was the father-in-law of Joseph Smith Jr. Hale's affidavit concerns his belief that the story of the translation of the gold plates was a delusion on the part of Smith and his associates.

Isaac doesn't comment of the Smith family work ethic and only gives glass-looking as Joseph's profession, but did pay to publish a denouncement of his son-in-law's profession.

[Lucy Harris](#) – Was the former wife of Martin Harris and implies that he became less industrious after joining the Mormons, but no comment on Smith's family work ethic.

Let's go back to our "Mexicans in the ward" metaphor. After building a house without permission on rented land, they move out refusing to pay their back rent into another area of the country. Could the views of neighbors be slightly tainted if asked about their "moral character" based on this alone? Sure. We should also consider one line that is particularly specific:

Joseph Smith, Senior, and his son Joseph, were in particular, considered entirely destitute of moral character, and addicted to vicious habits.

Remember that Alvin was the hard worker. He supported the family until his sudden death; while Joseph Smith Sr. earned money through popcorn and beer sales at holidays. Again with our Mexican family metaphor: if that house that was built on the rented property, wasn't even constructed by the father, while the eldest son was out and about earning income and also building the home the father could very much be seen as lazy.

Joseph Smith responded direct to the accusations against his character in December 1834 in the Messenger and Advocate in December 1834:

During this time, as is common to most, or all youths, I fell into many vices and follies; but as my accusers are, and have been forward to accuse me of being guilty of gross and outrageous violations of the peace and good order of the community, I take the occasion to remark, that, though, as I have said above, "as is common to most, or all youths, I fell into many vices and follies," I have not, neither can it be sustained, in truth, been guilty of wronging or injuring any man or society of men; and those imperfections to which I allude, and for which I have often had occasion to lament, were a light, and too often, vain mind, exhibiting a foolish and trifling conversation.

This being all, and the worst, that my accusers can substantiate against my moral character, I wish to add, that it is not without a deep feeling of regret that I am thus called upon in answer to my own conscience, to fulfill a duty I owe to myself, as well as to the cause of truth, in making this public confession of my former uncircumspect walk, and unchaste conversation: and more particularly, as I often acted in violation of those holy precepts which I knew came from God. But as the "Articles and Covenants" of this church are plain upon this particular point, I do not deem it important to proceed further. I only add, that (I do not, nor never have, pretended to be any other than a man "subject to passion," and liable, without the assisting grace of the Savior, to deviate from that perfect path in which all men are commanded to walk!)

What is interesting about this rebuttal to the accusations on his family is that Joseph does not refute claims of laziness, or of treasure hunting but simply says he had unchaste talk. Further he refers multiple times to folly. Sometimes apologists claim that his treasure hunting days were preparation for his work as a translator or a prophet but here, **Joseph in direct rebuttal to being accused of as a money digger calls it “Folly”. That seems to indicate that such activities were not considered by him to be a preparation or of God at all.** Indeed he uses the words “public confession of my former uncircumspect walk”.

All the FAIRMormon gathered newspaper clippings in the world claiming that money digging was common in the area or nothing to be ashamed of doesn't seem to refute that **Joseph, himself, felt the need publicly confess that this was inappropriate behavior.**

The Smiths and Religion – Modern church depictions show Joseph Smith's family as being very devote to multiple faiths; but just questioning; much in the way Jeremy Runnells asked questions of church leaders in his CES Letter. They depict the local church leadership as being uncaring, unwilling to answer questions, and quick to push off Smith questions, much like LDS leadership has treated Jeremy Runnells.

What was the Smith's relationship to religion?

Lucy, Hyrum and Samuel were Presbyterian until 1830; but they were removed from membership at their request for not attending church for a year and a half. Lucy was the driving force with Joseph Smith Sr. having revelatory dreams about needing to find the true religion. Again, if the Mexican family in the ward were less active, the gossip might be that they were lazy, no?

Milton V. Backman wrote this about the issue:

If the belittling statements by men who supposedly were acquainted with the Smith family were correct, and if members of the family had been liars, immoral, and "addicted to vicious habits," Lucy, Hyrum and Samuel would have been unable to retain their membership in the Western Presbyterian Church until 1830. In that era excommunications were frequent in most congregations, including the Presbyterian society of Palmyra. Individuals judged guilty of immorality, profanity, lying, drunkenness, gambling, and other such sins were excommunicated from this society. The reason members of the Smith family were dismissed from the Lord's Supper in the spring of 1830 was not because of any of the above charges but only because they desired to withdraw their membership and had neglected to attend church for a year and a half.

Conclusion – The Smiths were quite industrious but were called “lazy” by a lot of their neighbors. Rather than either taking the Hurlburt affidavits at face value; or decrying all of the neighbors as liars; manipulated by Satan to discredit “God's Work” one can probably review the situation as one of prejudice and human folly. I submit the ["Mexican family in the ward" analogy helps to resolve the issue with a simple metaphor](#)

This post took about 4 re-writes and countless hours of research. The interesting thing is that even though science was applied to it, or economics, or what have you, it is a 100% ad-hominem argument. A lazy boy could bring forward a true book, and an industrious worker could publish lies. It might help to understand the context of other statements, but all in all, it is a non-issue; and yet continues to have books published on both sides of the issue from 1834 until today.

As to whether God would wait 1500 years to reveal the one true gospel to a family that did the contemporary equivalent of buying lotto tickets, in a method that Joseph Smith Jr., himself, would call folly and publicly confess was questionable behavior; when so many contemporary families were so devoutly seeking God that the area would be called the Burned Over District in relation to religious revival zealotry says rather more of

God's character than perhaps the apologists realize. Concluding that Joseph Smith is the only individual in 1500 years god could trust, requires ignoring some of his more questionable later activities (such as Fanny Alger), as well as the sheer random nature of the Smith's ending up in Palmyra. I think it is a very flimsy claim; but bolstering that flimsy claim is necessary; as it moves from the realm of ad-hominem as soon as one claims Joseph Smith Jr. was the ONLY man God could trust to being very much dependent on his character and upbringing. As such I have to conclude that the Smith family "Weren't all that special" and his meta-physical-treasure seeking was not more than "Folly" and certainly not a Yoda-in-degobah-esque training ground for a prophet.

The restoration is unlikely to have been put off for 1500 for the Smith home, which seems by all accounts only mark-worthy outside their home being key to the restoration. As so we'll leave it with that circular logic. We only know this family from any other in the 1800's because God chose them, and the claim is that God chose them because they were special. They might not have been overly lazy; but they weren't spectacular either.

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: T is for...

Testing our ideas and this is really the only letter you need to prove the church is not true, but let's start with *Tumbaga* as it also starts with the letter "T".

Yes, this is kind of cheating because A was for Gold, and we touched on Tumbaga there. But some of the responses on Au made me curious. In it I claimed that 60 lbs would crush the lettering on the last page of the Book of Mormon if made of either Pure Gold or Tumbaga and that the last page from which the Title Page was taken would be illegible. People pointed out that if the title page was not after the sealed portion, then only 20 – 40 lbs would be on that title page; not the full 60lbs multiple reports say the book weighed.

So what do I do?

- Stick doggedly to my theory and ignore complaints?
- Do I call the people who attacked me taffy-pulling, dodos, or imply that they never really were true ex-Mormons?
- Do I simply make up a new theory trying to find something that fits the evidence and ignore I ever said this?

No! We test our ideas in science. I purchased two [tumbaga plates](#)... okay yes they are earrings; but they are comprised of the same copper to gold ratio that John Gee proposed and other apologists mostly agree would be necessary for the weight to work out right for the plates (30% copper to 70% gold). I emailed the creator of the earrings to verify the composition even (very sorry to her that these earrings are being sacrificed to science rather than being used to their intended purpose, but I hope she finds that this a more noble cause.)

I then imprinted "[Characters](#)" on them that could be distinctly seen. See how the indentations can be clearly seen in the ones on the right? First of all, making distinct characters in tumbaga is quite difficult. It took a lot of effort and warped easily. But you can see the indentations of it, as well as the earring back piece on the one on the right.

Methodology, I pounded into them with a philip's head screwdriver hit by a hammer, until I could see the "plus" symbol in the gold.

Then I placed both of them on top of each other under a 40 lbs weight for one month.

The result of the experiment: One can clearly see the imprint of the first plate on the lower plate.

See on the [left](#) there are three indentations. It may be [clearer seen here](#) where you can see dents in the untouched plate, in the two places that the "characters" were pounded into the top plate, as well as the earring backing.

[Close up of the warped under-plate, the one I didn't touch with a hammer and was imprinted by the top plate and the weight](#)

Complaints that will be made about this experiment:

- 1) I used 40 lbs, but the true weight should have been 20 lbs. This is a good point, I should repeat the experiment with 20 lbs; but the experiment proves a couple of things that should make this irrelevant. What this proves is that Tumbaga will move and shift (fairly quickly, 4 months isn't long

compared to 1000+ years. The gold plates lay hidden, deep in a mountain side) without requiring heat. It "Cold rolls". Regardless of the weight, the reason we don't have ancient civilizations making books out of it is that it really does mush out over months and years of weight making the characters illegible.

- 2) You didn't show every step of the process. Thus the experiment is invalid. Yes, my house was completely thrown into chaos mid-experiment (I meant to leave it for 2 months and re-measure, and then 4 months for example). I have a video somewhere of the process that I'll post online once I find it. This is a valid complaint. You have only my word that I didn't roll these out with a rolling pin when the camera was off (I didn't) but this, too is irrelevant to my point which is...

Conclusion – the real thing to take away from this is that the apologist who suggested the gold plates could be made of Tumbaga did not test his idea. Instead, he looked for something that matched his data points he needed and declared victory. That is NOT science. One of the key bits of science is that when we come up with a hypothesis, we then test that hypothesis to prove it false; not to find ways to make it true. That's a key difference and makes all difference in the world. Even if I totally botched my attempt at a test, that isn't what should be focused on, but rather that I tried to test it at all, and the question should be asked that with [the first several pages of google searches of Tumbaga all pointing to LDS apologist websites](#), why didn't a single one of them think of testing the material?!

Whether it is John Gee claiming victory because of double consonants in the epic of Gilgamesh compared to Giddigdonai, or tumbaga, or 16th century terms in the middle of the Book of Mormon, or Chiasmus or tapirs as horses or anything new they dream up; look for how they tested their ideas to invalidate the hypothesis. If the apologist has not tried it, you can dismiss them as just trying to confirm their biases. The technical term for this process is "Making shit up".

If you have a theory, whatever it is, you need to test that theory to prove it false; only accepting those claims that stand up to rigorous testing.

Tumbaga does not fit because under the flimsiest of tests, it fails as a medium to store data, yet one can find dozens of websites, and published papers claiming it "fits" the needs of the Book of Mormon. The whole of Mormonism can be proved false if one simply tests the claims, with any falsifiable claim, because rigorous testing shows that there are other, more rational explanations for the claims than what is required for the faith to be valid.

Apologists appear scientific by using big words, or finding data that supports their claims, but without a section on how they tried to rigorously disprove their theory and handing it off to an expert in the field to validate their idea (like I did by publishing my A is for Gold section and having experts come back and question if I was correct on how Tumbaga would play out as a writing surface) and then retesting their conclusions, you can dismiss them as just old men in arm chairs speculating. And we all know the church disapproves of speculation, as well as science.

Want to prove I'm wrong? Buy some [tumbaga plates](#) and run the experiment yourself! Testing our beliefs and the claims of people, including myself, is what we should be doing!

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: U is for...

Underwear. Yes, the famous "garment of the holy priesthood", which is something unique to Joseph Smith, also rare in that the original claims about the powers of the Garment have been fully rejected by modern Mormonism due to scientific evidence and historical research.

Let's delve into the story and origin of the garment, some rumors about it, and then specifically the ideas that have been debunked by science.

(Warning for those browsing at church: All images are images of the Garment throughout history. Don't open them unless you want people on the pew behind you to get very curious what you are browsing very fast)

Origin of the Garment

The garment as first described in the 1840s was a one-piece undergarment extending to the ankles and the wrists, resembling a union suit with an open crotch and a collar. It was made of unbleached cotton and was held together with ties in a double knot. Most garments were home-made. – Wikipedia

The Garment we know was introduced with the endowment because of early accounts mentioning the symbols being cut into the garment while the individual was wearing them.

The garment was unisex; with ribbons tying the crotch because Emma could not find buttons.

After Joseph Smith removed his garments and was shot in Carthage, several members were quite adamant that Joseph could only be killed because he removed his garment:

[Elder Kimball] Spoke of Elder Richards being protected at Carthage Jail -- having on the robe, while Joseph & Hyrum, and Elder Taylor were shot to pieces. (Heber C. Kimball's diary for 21 Dec. 1845 kept by William Clayton as cited in The Nauvoo Endowment Companies p. 117)

This garment protects from disease, and even death, for the bullet of an enemy will not penetrate it. The Prophet Joseph carelessly left off this garment on the day of his death, and had he not done so, he would have escaped unharmed. (Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of Utah (San Francisco, CA: The History Company, Publishers, 1890), 357 n.17)

'When Willard Richards was solicited [by Smith] to do the same [Remove the garment], he declined, and it seems little less than marvelous that he was preserved without so much as a bullet piercing his garments.'" - Joseph F. Smith

Nowadays, the church leverages the below statement by John Taylor that they removed the Garment from heat, to downplay that there was ever a protection aspect to the garment, but John Taylor too claimed the Garment was physically protective:

"Elder John Taylor confirmed the saying that Joseph and Hyrum and himself were without their robes in the jail at Carthage, while Doctor Richards had his on, but corrected the idea that some had, that they had taken them off through fear. W. W. Phelps said Joseph told him one day about that time, that he had **laid aside his garment on account of the hot weather.**

Another thing of interest is that Joseph ordered the Garments be destroyed (entirely) at one point:

"Smith had . . . given orders for members of the Quorum of the Anointed at Nauvoo to destroy their endowment 'garments.' Levi Richards had entered the Anointed Quorum in December 1843. His wife reminisced that the mob asked William Law to describe the endowment garments and robes. 'The order came that in every habitation where any of the endowment clothes were found, [it] would [mean] death,' she wrote. Therefore, the members of the Anointed Quorum began 'to tear to pieces the garments, etc.' . . .

Rumors about the Garment

- First, that it was a physical protection (as is stated in the Endowment "[The Garment] will be a shield and a protection to you against the power of the destroyer"
- Second, that it shouldn't be altered or modified.

Stories of Protection

Utah folklorists Austin and Alta Fife recorded more such testimonials:

'In war, shrapnel and slugs have penetrated the outer clothing but failed to penetrate the garments. When a Saint was caught in a treacherous snow slide all his clothing save the garments was torn to shreds.' Because of this belief, a local Relief Society president instructed women in her neighborhood 'that they must never take their garments entirely off. She said when taking a bath to always leave one leg and one arm in the garments.'" (Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, 276)

Consider the story about the two missionaries in New England who took their clothes to a local Laundromat.

When they returned to pick up their clothes, so the story goes, they were horrified to find that the proprietor had put their garments on display in his front window with a sign that said, 'Mormon Monkey Suits.'... The missionaries had no choice but to shake the dust from their feet on the front steps and leave. The next morning, the missionaries returned to talk with the owner. When they arrived, they discovered that the Laundromat had burned to the ground." (Mormon Myth-ellaneous 146)

Or the famous interview with Bill Marriot:

Mike Wallace: Do you wear the sacred undergarments?

Willard Marriott: Yes, I do. And I can tell you they do protect you from harm.

Mike Wallace: Really?

Willard Marriott: Uh-huh. I was in a very serious boat accident. Fire—boat was on fire, I was on fire. I was burned. My pants were burned right off of me. I was not burned above my knee. Where the garment was, I was not burned.

Mike Wallace: And you believe it was the sacred undergarments?

Willard Marriott: I do. Particularly on my legs, because my pants were gone, but my undergarments were not singed.

When Willard Richards was solicited [by Smith] to do the same [Remove the garment], he declined, and it seems little less than marvelous that he was preserved without so much as a bullet piercing his garments." — Heber J. Grant journal sheets, 7 June 1907, LDS Archives

Hugh Nibley went so far as to state in Temple and Cosmos that Athena's coat given to her by Zeus was a reference to the temple garment as it protected her (As we all know, that the garment allows members to turn into Ravens just like the cloak or that any article of clothing must be a reference to the garment, even if a cloak is worn on the outside as opposed to underwear)

Details about altering or modifying the Garment

The first attempt at revising the garment came in 1890:

“Sister Zina D. H. Young submitted a knitted garment something like our garments which is made in the East and asked if such may be marked & have a collar put on it and used as our Temple garment. It was decided by the First Presidency that such garments should not be used in lieu of the pattern given.” – L. John Nuttall Journal, Vol 3, p. 227; 8 December 1890

The first public description of the Garment was published in April, 1890 in “The Return Vol II,” his periodical after being editor for The Times and Seasons.

The Garment was then described in 1898 by the prophet when he got after members (mostly women) for altering the Garment from being the long-john male only version:

“Each individual should be provided with the endowment clothing they need. The garments must be clean and white, and of the approved pattern; they must not be altered or mutilated, and are to be worn as intended, down to the wrist and ankles, and around the neck. These requirements are imperative; admission to the Temple will be refused to those who do not comply therewith.” – President Joseph F. Smith, “Instructions Concerning Temple Ordinance Work,” President of the Salt Lake Temple 1898-1911

And again on 9 August, 1906 –

“The Lord has given unto us garments of the holy priesthood, and you know what that means. And yet there are those of us who mutilate them, in order that we may follow the foolish, vain and indecent practices of the world.” “In order that such people may imitate the fashions, they will not hesitate to mutilate that which should be held by them the most sacred of all things in the world, next to their own virtue, next to their own purity of life. They should hold these things that God has given unto them sacred, unchanged and unaltered from the very pattern in which God gave them. Let us have the moral courage to stand against the opinions of fashion, and especially where fashion compels us to break a covenant and so commit a grievous sin.” President Joseph F. Smith, “Fashion and the Violation of Covenants and Duty,” Improvement Era 9, August 1906, 812-815

As part of this push, plaques were put up in the temple that stated the Garment should not be modified or altered in anyway. In some of the older temples these plaques still stand (I saw one in 2005, can't vouch after that). The Garment referred to in all the statements made about not altering the garment is the long-john stiff color, on piece version. They do not refer to "pinning the garment up" or slightly altering the garment to fit your skirt (a.k.a. Mrs. Romney's method). This was applying the words from the 1908-1916 push to fit the modern concept of what the garment became.

Historical research that debunks the idea that the Garment should Never be Altered:

1 October, 1922 - George B. Richards's had a conversation with Sister Maria Dougall in October 1922. At that time he learned that Joseph Smith had not designed the garments and temple clothing, but had given it to Emma wholly (to design)

In 1923 a committee to research origins of garment under First Presidency direction. By the 17 May, 1923, the Church approved a shorter garment for optional use outside the temple (extending to the elbows and knees rather than the wrists and ankles). However, the longer garment remains mandatory for use in the temple.

The interesting thing here is both that the Q15 realized they were wrong in the idea they were pushing, but also weren't willing to just admit it and change everywhere. Keep old and frumpy for the temple, but change for the eyes of the world.

"After careful and prayerful consideration it was unanimously decided that the following modifications may be permitted, and a garment of the following style be worn by those Church members who wish to adopt it, namely: (1) Sleeve to elbow. (2) Leg just below knee. (3) Buttons instead of strings. (4) Collar eliminated. (5) Crotch closed. (Letter from Heber J. Grant, First Presidency letter)

In 1975, the long, pre-1923 garment became optional in the temple and was eventually discontinued. David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994)

Please note that there are records of members leaving the church during this time period, as they feel the brethren altered something that was unalterable.

Four years later the First Presidency announced a two-piece temple garments. The new style garments were offered in addition to, and priced about the same as, the regular one-piece variety. No explanation for or description of the new garments was given.

In 1999, a camouflage green Military Garment was issued.

In 2005 silkscreened garments were introduced, including silk-screening the markings on the inside of other clothing for military and police.

The reason that the FLDS wear long dresses and still use the full garment; and that non-Brighamite versions of Mormonism do not require the garment is that [the garment's history is very much tied up with the leaders who followed Brigham](#), and the research and history investigation conducted only within the Brighamite offshoot.

Now as to the rumor of the protection the Garment, the current page on [FAIRMormon](#) states:

Modern-day Church leaders have since clarified that the temple garment serves as "a protection against temptation and evil" and instead of it being some type of 'lucky talisman' the "promise of protection [associated with it] is conditioned upon worthiness and faithfulness." (First Presidency Letter, 10 October 1988; see *Ensign*, August 1997, 19-).

On another page of [FAIRMormon](#) they state:

Hostile critics of the Restoration often mock the Latter-day Saint practice of wearing temple garments. They refer to these ritual items of clothing as "magic underwear" or "Mormon burquas" in order to shock, ridicule and offend.

Latter-day Saints wear the garment as a private reminder of covenants and promises made to God. The blessings and protection which derive from it come by God's will through keeping the covenants associated with it. The promised protection is primarily spiritual, but this does not mean that God may not also grant physical protection as he sees fit.

Further, on [Oct 19, 2014 the LDS church published an article](#) on the Garment (Which shocked many members as it displayed actual garments) on its website:

Garments are a symbolic gesture of the promises that Mormons have made to God...It serves as a constant reminder of the covenants made during the temple endowment.... It fosters a mindset of continual obedience to the Lord, which is crucial in keeping the covenants entered into in the temple.

What we see here is that FAIRMormon, the LDS Ensign (the official publication) and LDS.org has published articles specifically downplaying the early beliefs of the protective nature of the Garment.

We must ask ourselves why the need to revise the previous history of the Garment, when so many sources throughout Mormon history clearly see a physically protective aspect to the garment.

There is no long history of people meeting in committee discussing the claims of protection. There is no set of official statements released to members. **The only answer must be empirical evidence.** It appears the turning point in the rhetoric followed Paul H. Dunn's claims that the Garment protected him in battle:

"The sole survivor among 11 infantrymen in a 100-yard race against death, during which one burst of machine-gun fire ripped his right boot off, another tore off his ammunition and canteen belt and yet another split his helmet in half - all without wounding him." - Paul Dunn, "Official Apologizes for Embellishing Stories," Washington Times, October 28, 1991

Paul H Dunn's stories were easily verifiable and proven false. He had to admit they were false publicly and this encouraged individuals to apply science and numbers to the claims of the church. Once members and non-members thought to test the claims, even the most cursory testing quickly revealed that the garments are nothing more than cloth as far as "Magic armor" goes. They don't repel bullets or prevent burns. Mormons die in war at the same rate as other groups, they simply attribute those who survive to the wearing of the Garment. Mormons who wear the Garment have the same recovery rates at the University of Utah, Primary Children's and Utah Valley Regional Medical, as well as the same death rates regardless of garment use.

Indeed, there is not empirical evidence for the garment's success, as many members claim, or else FAIRMormon would clearly state and source such evidence. They cite many statements to show it was believed historically, but then downplay those statements, not cite the times and occurrences to build up an empirically-based argument of the protective nature. The church and even the apologists have given up a fundamental belief about the nature and purpose of this concept unique to Joseph Smith's religion.

Conclusion

Historical research altered the garment from a nightmarish unisex 1800's uniform to something comfortable that complies with societal norms. Science turned the common claims that the garment was physically magical into a spiritual/mental concept entirely. Science, that was researched because of the outrageous false claims by a General Authority.

What we see is that Science and Historical research can, and do, shift Mormon thought. Exmormons tempted to share historical or scientific concepts should not feel ashamed or afraid to interject them into conversation as Mormonism has already been shaped by Historical research and scientific evidence. And every Temple-worthy TBM is wearing proof, morning, noon and night, that Mormonism's most sacred and key concepts can be altered by Science and Historical research.

Let the garment go from being a symbol of devotion to God, to a symbol of the power of empirical evidence, and historical research on extraordinary claims. Let the altered garment give hope to every exmormon, the religion will change at its very core due to reason.

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: V is for...

Victims

The wonderful thing about our world today is the way science has leaked into so many aspects of life to impact and improve things. My family are huge fans of Columbo, CSI, and other shows that routinely have resolution due to forensic science. We now have technology that takes the "guess work" out of crime. Let's review some of the times the LDS church stated things and how it impacted victims:

Mountain Meadows Massacre – Low hanging fruit, I know. The church blamed [Piute Indians for the attack for the better part of 150 years](#) but in [2001, forensic science proved the Piutes were not to blame](#) and in [2007 the church published in the Ensign](#):

For a century and a half the Mountain Meadows Massacre has shocked and distressed those who have learned of it. The tragedy has deeply grieved the victims' relatives, burdened the perpetrators' descendants and Church members generally with sorrow and feelings of collective guilt, unleashed criticism on the Church, and raised painful, difficult questions.

Two facts make the case even more difficult to fathom. First, nothing that any of the emigrants purportedly did or said, even if all of it were true, came close to justifying their deaths. Second, the large majority of perpetrators led decent, nonviolent lives before and after the massacre.

Only 150 years of victim blaming before saying that it was unjustified. Not bad. Remember, Brigham Young said, touring the spot of the massacre:

"Vengeance is mine and I will repay saith the Lord"

[And then built a statue saying as much on the spot](#). But with science we know that Vengeance wasn't the Lord's, this act was brutal violence that was unjustified and that the church loves to blame victims and pretend whatever it does is not just right, but divine in origin.

[\(The New Statue is a touch kinder, but doesn't take responsibility\)](#)

1978 and the Priesthood – In [February 1852, Brigham Young gave a speech](#) that would serve as the excuse and standard for keeping slaves in the Utah Territory. It would be an anchor point that later apostles would base their talks off of, and collectively be used by Ezra Benson, Mark Peterson and Bruce R. McConkie to justify labeling civil rights a "Communist Agenda" and preventing David O. McKay from letting the church be on the forefront of the Civil Rights movement.

This speech, and the doctrines contained therein, are now entirely denounced by the church as of 2012's [Race and the Priesthood essay](#) which states

Over time, Church leaders and members advanced many theories to explain the priesthood and temple restrictions. None of these explanations is accepted today as the official doctrine of the Church.

So now we know that, in fact, Brigham's words are not doctrine nor are divine, what did he say?

Now I tell you what I know; when the mark was put upon Cain, Abel's children was in all probability young; the Lord told Cain that he should not receive the blessings of the priesthood nor his seed, until the last of the posterity of Able had received the priesthood, until the redemption of the earth.

Note, this quote is used in the Race and The Priesthood essay, without stating the attribution to Brigham.

The seed of Cain would have received had they not been cursed; and hold the keys of the priesthood, until the times of the restitution shall come, and the curse be wiped off from the earth, and from michals seed.

You see, what Brigham taught, and what has been disavowed is that it is black people's fault for being black. Victim blaming. However, science on melanin; DNA evidence, etc. has showed this set of theories to be quite flawed.

It only took the church 160 years to stop blaming the victims on this one. What's that? 1978... well they removed the ban then, but they didn't discount Brigham's words, blaming the victim until 2012; that's 160 years from 1852.

And when I went to [BYU in 1996 there was a play called "Free at Last"](#) in which it was suggested that the restriction on the priesthood was not the Black people's fault. Afterwards there was a Q&A session and almost everyone in the audience commented that they had never thought it might be a reason other than the Black people as to why the priesthood was restriction (The play suggested the bigoted whites were the reason, and God was protecting the Black people).

So by 1996, victim blaming was till super strong at the Church's University.

160 years of victim blaming, turned over by science.

Rape at BYU – [Even as I'm writing this there is a major scandal underway at BYU](#) wherein rapists are protected by the honor code. This story has hit international news channels.

Currently when a person is sexually assaulted, if they report to the Provo police, or to a bishop; they are sent to the Honor Code office to have their academic future put under review to see if they broke the honor code during the event. Victims find themselves having to prove their innocence without legal counsel, evidence gathered by police, or any number of things we think of typically as "Due process", instead they are beholden to what the Honor Code Office thinks and believes.

This encourages rape survivors to not turn in rapists, essentially protecting the rapists.

But don't worry, in 150-160 years, I'm sure the church will publish an essay that the honor code wording was never inspired and just the concepts of world today. Of course that's only if we find forensic evidence that rapists were protected through science, because God is divine until a cotton swab picks up some DNA and is placed under a microscope.

For more stories of Victim Blaming:

- [ERA](#)
- [Thomas B. Marsh and Orson Hyde being good citizens and being excommunicated for it](#)
- [Church PR blames the scandal about excommunicating legally married homosexuals and preventing their children from being baptized on those who exposed the leak](#)

- Financial scandals and the impact of blaming Emma for not permitting Polygamy
- LDS Child abuse stance pushes blame-the-victim mentality
- Institutionalized victim-blaming in divorce cases

And let's not forget that girls are responsible for dressing modestly in the For Strength of Youth pamphlet from 1965 until the most recent version. Victim-blaming before the crime has even been committed.

Conclusion

Victims and a little science, and you too can know that prophet's words were never prophetic.

ABC'S of Science and Exmormonism: W is for...

Weapons! I thought of possibly doing "White" but we've covered DNA and Race and the Priesthood; and we really haven't covered one of the Apologist's bugbears so let's do it.

Weapons are pretty central to the story of the Book of Mormon. From Laban's sword in first Nephi to, well, Laban's sword being buried by Moroni, we have a host of weapons in between as well as a kind of awkward arms race in the middle. But what apologists and Joseph seem to miss is that weapons don't just spring out whole-cloth like one experiences with [the D&D weapons Manual](#) suggests. No matter how useful a 10-foot pole is, Tetsubo pole arms and long swords and scythes all developed at different times for specific purposes.

Horses in combat vanished after WWI for a reason. And the invention of the stirrup changed warfare forever. We're going to run with the comparison to a kid playing D&D, or perhaps George R.R. Martin's Game of Thrones as a comparison, because looking back on history we throw all the weapons and armor into one huge category of "Historical warfare" with almost no thought as to the times and places. Our movies throw crossbows, longbows and tributes all into the same battle with nary a thought of locations, materials and technological advancement. The thesis of this post is that Joseph Smith's book is clearly a work of fiction because it follows that "historical warfare" outlook on weapons and armor, instead of a realistic, historical progression of weapons for specific purposes.

Let's start with [The Armor of God in the Bible](#).

Therefore take up the full armor of God... Stand firm then, with the belt of truth fastened around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness arrayed, and with your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The first thing you might notice is that the Full Armor of God is missing pants. Apparently God doesn't care about pants. But what's more is that it is missing [pauldrans](#). Even Iron Man knows that [pauldrans are important, I mean he keeps weapons in there](#). So why no pants or pauldrans? Well Paul lived before [pant-armor](#) were invented and greaves were common (Cuisses were invented in the 13th and 14th century, greaves existed in Rome and Greek times but were more of the "Feet shod" and less of the "Pants" in that era). [Pauldrons only existed since the middle of the 1400's](#) which is to say armor developed different pieces at different times, and we see that in the bible that Paul only knows about armor contemporary to him.

That's what we'd expect in a historical text.

Now the Bible, being historical, has its own problems. Steel was produced in bloomery furnaces for thousands of years, but its extensive use began after more efficient production methods were devised in the 17th century; which is problematic for the bible. But bad steel was available as early as 1800 B.C.

([The earliest known production of steel are pieces of ironware excavated from an archaeological site in Anatolia \(Kaman-Kalehoyuk\) and are nearly 4,000 years old](#)). China got quench-hardened steel in 403–221 BC. Distribution of steel was not even, nor was the quality of the steel from country to country and much discussion has been had about what steel really means. For example the bible hub states:

In all cases were the word "steel" occurs in the Authorized Version the true rendering of the Hebrew is "copper." Whether the ancient Hebrews were acquainted with steel is not perfectly

certain. It has been inferred from a passage in (Jeremiah 15:12) that the "iron from the north" there spoken of denoted a superior kind of metal, hardened in an unusual manner, like the steel obtained from the Chalybes of the Pontus, the iron smiths of the ancient world. The hardening of iron for cutting instruments was practiced in Pontus, Lydia and Laconia. There is, however, a word in Hebrew, *paldah*, which occurs only in (Nahum 2:3) (4) and is there rendered "torches," but which most probably denotes steel or hardened iron, and refers to the flashing scythes of the Assyrian chariots. Steel appears to have been known to the Egyptians. The steel weapons in the tomb of Rameses III., says Wilkinson, are painted blue, the bronze red.

This must be a bit awkward for Book of Mormon Apologists because all uses of the word "Steel" in the Bible should be rendered copper. Yes there is some small indication that Hebrews knew about steel as a substance; but it's pretty weak. Steel bows were not steel. But Nephi uses the words "Steel" and "copper" which means he had two distinct concepts "translated" uniquely.

So let's move to the Book of Mormon

The Sword of Laban – Under [A is for Gold](#) we discussed how a gold hilt would make a poor weapon and that Nibley could only find a single gold hilted weapon in all of history, King Tut's gold dagger (that was ornamental only). [Turns out it wasn't gold either, but meteorite.](#)

Well [Jeff Lindsay of FAIRMormon goes on and on about Laban's sword not being anachronistic](#) but one of his primary sources and only indications of a sword made of steel in the contemporary time period and location links to an article which reads:

[Upon further review” is a phrase we sometimes cringe to hear. It usually means that we missed the first call, that we somehow got the facts wrong in our initial pronouncement...Unfortunately, the claims made in the Journal suggesting that this iron knife was actually made of steel and that it was really a “short sword” are incorrect and unsupportable.](#)

I'm really glad that the BYU publisher corrected this mistake. I guess Mr. Lindsay missed the memo that his article disproves his point, rather than supporting it, as he still has it up in full view.

Nephi's Steel Bow – This is a unique one in that the use of the steel is named. You can't make a bow out of Iron and call it a success, because the bow has to spring to be usable (And yes the text mentions him using it to hunt for food). Bows were available since 20,000 B.C. but [steel bows were first invented in India in 269-237 B.C. \(that's 450+ years after Nephi\).](#)

But there is more to it. Why were they invented in India?

India has always shown great inventiveness with weapons, especially during her early historic period (circa 269-237 B.C.), and many of the arms she produced were entirely of metal.

Further:

There was a well-organised army structure in India at a very early date and large, well-maintained armouries were kept by the various rulers. The steel bow would have made an ideal munition arm. Properly greased, it would have emerged better from storage than any other type of bow, and could have been used immediately.

And what happens once they invent it?

V. R. Dikshitar, in his book, says that "steel was the new invention and the old things were cast aside for the new". He is probably referring to the Mughal period, when the steel bow was widely used.

That's right, everyone uses it. Once you invent a superior weapon you don't just ignore it or give it to your one main character like Brienne of Tarth with the Valarian Steel. That's the thing for role-playing adventures and quests in fantasy. In history, you make a weapon that is superior, you mass produce it.

Nephi, being the sole owner of a Steel Bow is not just anachronistic, it is a quenched-steel bow so it would have spring, and it means that Jerusalem simply lost this technology for all their later wars... say with Babylon:

The ancient Babylonians used sharpened weapons such as sickle swords, socketed axes, spears, and the Egyptian-derived bladed mace, as well as clubs and staffs, and projectiles flung from war slings. The Babylonians were a Bronze Age people, so the bladed weapons they used were made of a softer metal than later civilization's iron and steel.

If Jerusalem had "Magic" steel bows, they wouldn't have lost to a bronze-age technology conqueror, like the Spanish Conquistadors with their muskets and steel who trashed the Aztec; the Jerusalem super-advanced army would have won.

Swords – We've covered that there were no swords during the Book of Mormon time period on the American Continent in F is for Fighting.

Armor – Armor should be enough to disturb any person who believes that the book has no mistakes.

In [Mosiah 21](#) we read that Limhi's people have armor:

And they gathered themselves together again, and put on their armor, and went forth against the Lamanites to drive them out of their land.

And the Lamanites respond by inventing Armor in [Alma 3](#):

Now the heads of the Lamanites were shorn; and **they were naked, save it were skin which was girded about their loins, and also their armor.**

But then Moroni invents the stuff, and the [Lamanites have never seen it before a book later](#) when Moroni trounces Zarahemna:

Behold, we are not of your faith; we do not believe that it is God that has delivered us into your hands; but we believe that it is your cunning that has preserved you from our swords. **Behold, it is your breastplates and your shields that have preserved you.**

[All of which are curious since Nephi had a clear picture in his head of what armor was, having removed it from Laban](#)

And after I had smitten off his head with his own sword, I took the garments of Laban and put them upon mine own body; yea, even every whit; and I did gird on his armor about my loins.

What kind of armor did they have in Jerusalem in 600 B.C. that Nephi would have known about? [Something more like this.](#)

Head plates, yes, breast plates, yes and shields, but hardly what one would expect. Note no swords. Bronze-age weaponry.

So the Nephites and Lamanites continuously forget that armor exists as a concept and run a weird arms race of re-inventing the breast plate.

One might argue that it's a different technology in armor or weaponry.

But this is the other curious thing, throughout the Book of Mormon there is no technological developments in the weaponry. We don't find that they start quenching steel. They don't mention enhancements to bows. We do get city defenses being mentioned which is a problem in its own right as there is only one walled city in all of [Meso-america or the heartland Chitzen Itza](#) and it has low walls such that "High on the city wall" is about 3 feet off the ground. No big deal for Samuel the Lamanite to jump off of at all. Indeed, walls as defenses has enough anachronism that it could have been the whole letter "W" by itself.

Cimeters – Apologists go on and on about the scimitar being evidence for Cimeters; but words have meanings and spellings matter. [Scimitar](#) is an anachronistic word, existing about 15th century forward.

1540s, cimierie, from Middle French cimenterre (15c.) or Italian scimitarra, of uncertain origin. Turkish would be the expected source, but no such word has been found there. Perhaps from Persian shamshir (pronounced "shamsher," compare Greek sampsera "a barbarian sword," from this source), but OED finds this "unsatisfactory as to form." Many early variations; the modern spelling is from influence of the Italian form of the word. Century Dictionary (1902) has simitar as preferred spelling.

"Cimeter", of course has no meaning in Mayan, or any Native American word. So we're left with a conundrum. Curved Egyptian swords exist from the 23rd Dynasty, 893-870 B.C. but they have their own names, history and reason for being invented. Further, the reason a [Scimitar is curved is that:](#)

Scimitars were used in horse warfare because of their relatively light weight when compared to larger swords and their curved design, good for slashing opponents while riding on a horse.

So if a Cimeter is a curved weapon, that would indicate horse-backed combat and that leads to a whole additional slew of anachronisms. Slashing weapons are for mounted men who want a light blade to draw as they ride past. I'd like any apologist in the world to point out a [cavalry charge in the Book of Mormon](#)
...Warning GoT spoilers...

In fact to have cavalry and armor, you need to invent stirrups with a loop... [something that was invented 100 years after Nephi left the Middle East.](#)

No cavalry... no curved swords, and the concept of a Cimeter or Scimitar is still an anachronism.

No pants – The final thought I'll leave you with is that the Nephites, Lamanites, and Jaredites never think of pants armor. In the [Doctrine and Covenants](#) God still never thinks of Pants armor. It's like the armor throughout the entirety of scripture is based on the Roman design Paul is describing. The contemporary armor around the time of Paul is frozen as the golden standard. It would be like wearing a suit of King Henry the V armor in the middle of WWII (520 years difference). Or Iron Man's armor forgetting pants.

Additionally, there's no update with Pauldrons. There's no conversation about [rapier-swords able to puncture armor, or find the holes](#). There is no mention of the development of various pole-arms. Technology just stands still.

No mention about how the Nephites only fought between [elites like the Mayan](#) or that they primarily used distance weapons. Spears are mentioned, but they are underplayed as most of the meso-American hand to hand was spear-fighting throughout the BOM time periods.

Conclusion

In fact the entire thing reads like a page out of D&D, with the most famous of weapons from the middle ages and Roman armor with a single designation like "Plate" or "Chain Mail" sufficing for all of the concepts of armor. The weapons exist independent of their environment. The Armor vacillates between being invented and not being invented on both sides. The technology, like the Light saber in Star Wars, seems to be mostly unchanged over a thousand year period which doesn't match reality at all. ([This image supposedly took place 26,000 years before the Battle Of Yavin at the end of Star Wars a New Hope, for example](#))

The weaponry and armor in the Book of Mormon squarely place it in the category of fiction.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_weapons

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: X is for...

X marks the spot.

We covered a bit of treasure hunting when we covered the Smith family in "[S is for Smiths](#)", but there is more to the treasure hunting aspect. One of the big questions is "Why was treasure hunting so big in that era?" For example, even Mark Twain's "Tom Sawyer" features a treasure hunt of "Injun Joe", and apologists are [constantly reminding us that treasure hunts were huge in and around Joseph Smith, so his behavior wasn't that odd](#).

But why was it such a big deal right then and there. I mean "[Treasure Island](#)" that redefined Pirates was published in 1883, and in fact the [treasure hunting genre was really birthed in the 1800s](#).

Captain William Kidd - a man of treasure on controversy

So what happened? Well there was a police chase down the highway where the perpetrator tossed the goods out the window. And in this case the "goods" was a fat load of treasure. Imagine watching that on your TV and knowing the treasure could be just a little ways from where you lived.

In this case the perpetrator was [Captain Kidd](#) at first hired to track down pirates, and later leaving the law to join piracy a-la Captain Jack Sparrow-convinces-Will Turner-and-Elizabeth Swann-to-turn-pirate style.

Kidd and other members of the crew mutinied, ousted the captain of the ship, and sailed to the British colony of Nevis. There they renamed the ship Blessed William. Kidd became captain, either the result of an election of the ship's crew or because of appointment by Christopher Codrington, governor of the island of Nevis. Captain Kidd and Blessed William became part of a small fleet assembled by Codrington to defend Nevis from the French, with whom the English were at war... Kidd and his men attacked the French island of Marie-Galante, destroyed the only town, and looted the area, gathering for themselves something around 2,000 pounds Sterling.

During the War of the Grand Alliance, on orders from the provinces of New York and Massachusetts, Kidd captured an enemy privateer, which duty he was commissioned to perform (He received 150 pounds for doing this). Kidd contributed to building of the Trinity Church in New York, and On 16 May 1691, Kidd married Sarah Bradley Cox Oort, an English woman in her early twenties, who had already been twice widowed and was one of the wealthiest women in New York, largely because of her inheritance from her first husband.

He then was commissioned to hunt down some pirates and sold his ship and was funded by great British lords. He bought, what might be thought of as a giant pirate-killing ship, "Adventures Galley"

Adventure Galley, was well suited to the task of catching pirates; weighing over 284 tons burthen, she was equipped with 34 cannon, oars, and 150 men. The oars were a key advantage as they enabled Adventure Galley to maneuver in a battle when the winds had calmed and other ships were dead in the water. Kidd took pride in personally selecting the crew, choosing only those he deemed to be the best and most loyal officers.

He then engaged in a very "Fuck the Police" move, refusing to countersign to British ships and instead having his crew nautically drop their pants and moon them:

The Adventure Galley sailed down the Thames, Kidd unaccountably failed to salute a Navy yacht at Greenwich, as custom dictated. The Navy yacht then fired a shot to make him show respect, and Kidd's crew responded with an astounding display of impudence — by turning and slapping their backsides in [disdain].

How Captain Kidd plays into Joseph's story

Yes yes yes, Mithryn, but what does this all have to do with Joseph Smith. We're getting there. I promise:

A third of his crew soon perished on the Comoros due to an outbreak of cholera.

Comoros, with the capital of Moroni; featured prominently. You see after he flashed his fanny to the British, they took his crew into legit service; and he had to refill. So instead of hardened navy men, he had crew that wasn't ready for Africa, and 1/3 died. THAT is why Comoros fits into the narrative and the capital "Moroni" is mentioned. [Moroni translates as "in the heart of the fire", perhaps alluding to the city's location at the foot of Mount Karthala, an active volcano.](#)

Founded by Arabs, why a Native American in 150 B.C. would have an Arabic name really boggles the mind.

But to Joseph Smith, who loved Captain Kidd stories; it becomes a prominent name.

[Pomeroy Tucker, who was essentially the same age as Smith, said Joseph “had learned to read works of fiction and records of criminality, such for instance as would be classed with the ‘dime novels’ of the present day. The stories of Stephen Burroughs and Captain Kidd, and the like, presented the highest claims for his expanding mental perceptions.”](#)

Another Palmyra native, Philetus Spear, said that Joseph Smith as a boy “had for a library a copy of the ‘Arabian Nights,’ stories of Captain Kidd, and a few novels.”

According to James H. Kennedy, Joseph Sr. while living in Vermont had “at times engaged in hunting for Captain Kidd's buried treasure,” and that young Joseph's own reading about the pirate had “made a deep impression on him.”

Palmyra resident Ann Eaton added that Kidd was “his hero.” Joseph may have read Washington Irving's short story on the adventurous life of Kidd the Pirate, which was published in Philadelphia in 1824 and in New York in 1825.

More likely, Joseph and his family had read several of the many exaggerated ‘dime novel’ knock-offs about Kidd and other pirates which were based on the 1724 and 1728 popular two-volume, *A General History of Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates*, by Daniel Defoe.

You see, Joseph didn't just know about Kidd, he loved Kidd. He is recorded as reading him by multiple witnesses and holding Kidd as his hero by one.

Let's finish our story of Captain Kidd:

As it became obvious that his ambitious enterprise was failing, Kidd became understandably desperate to cover its costs. But, once again, he failed to attack several ships when given a chance, including a Dutchman and a New York privateer. Some of the crew deserted Kidd the next time

Adventure Galley anchored offshore, and those who decided to stay on made constant open-threats of mutiny.

So he's low on funds, and people are deserting. What's a lawman to do when the criminals aren't findable? Well that's been disputed for years. The wiki article shows edits from multiple sources but the basics are:

On 30 January 1698, he raised French colours and took his greatest prize, the 400-ton Quedagh Merchant, an Indian ship hired by Armenian merchants that was loaded with satins, muslins, gold, silver, an incredible variety of East Indian merchandise, as well as extremely valuable silks. When this news reached England, it confirmed Kidd's reputation as a pirate, and various naval commanders were ordered to "pursue and seize the said Kidd and his accomplices" for the "notorious piracies".

Note that Kidd tried the rest of his life to clear his name, feeling persecuted for his beliefs... another common connection with Joseph.

He renamed the captured ship "Adventure's Prize" and after a mutiny, Kidd left the Adventure Galley behind, ordering her to be burnt because she had become worm-eaten and leaky. Before burning the ship, he was able to salvage every last scrap of metal, such as hinges. With the loyal remnant of his crew, he returned to the Caribbean aboard the Adventure Prize.

Now we get to dumping the loot to avoid prosecution by the police:

Prior to returning to New York City, Kidd learned that he was a wanted pirate, and that several English men-of-war were searching for him. **Realizing that Adventure Prize was a marked vessel, he cached it in the Caribbean Sea and continued toward New York aboard a sloop. He deposited some of his treasure on Gardiners Island, hoping to use his knowledge of its location as a bargaining tool.** Kidd found himself in Oyster Bay, as a way of avoiding his mutinous crew who gathered in New York. In order to avoid them, Kidd sailed 120 miles around the eastern tip of Long Island, and then doubled back 90 miles along the Sound to Oyster Bay. He felt this was a safer passage than the highly trafficked Narrows between Staten Island and Brooklyn.

Captain Kidd's actions lead to the Treasure hunting/piracy stories we know and love today

His long way round left rumors of treasure just about everywhere in New York. Those rumors became the basis for the "dime store novels" Joseph would read.

The new Tory ministry hoped to use Kidd as a tool to discredit the Whigs who had backed him, but Kidd refused to name names, naively confident his patrons would reward his loyalty by interceding on his behalf. There is speculation that he probably would have been spared had he talked. Finding Kidd politically useless, the Tory leaders sent him to stand trial before the High Court of Admiralty in London, for the charges of piracy on high seas and the murder of William Moore.

Whilst awaiting trial, Kidd was confined in the infamous Newgate Prison, and wrote several letters to King William requesting clemency. He was shocked to learn at his trial that he was charged with murder. He was found guilty on all charges (murder and five counts of piracy). He was hanged on 23 May 1701, at Execution Dock, Wapping, in London. During the execution, the hangman's rope broke and Kidd was hanged on the second attempt. His body was gibbeted over the River Thames at Tilbury Point—as a warning to future would-be pirates—for three years.

Here we have another parallel. Joseph insisted on his own innocence in trial after trial. Loyalty, believing the government would preserve him, etc.

The 1701 broadside song Captain Kid's Farewell to the Seas, or, the Famous Pirate's Lament lists
*"Two hundred bars of gold, * and rix dollars manifold, * we seized uncontrolled".

This belief made its contributions to literature in:

- Edgar Allan Poe's "The Gold-Bug";
- Washington Irving's The Devil and Tom Walker;
- Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island
- Nelson DeMille's Plum Island.

It also gave impetus to the constant treasure hunts conducted on Oak Island in Nova Scotia; in Suffolk County, Long Island in New York where Gardiner's Island is located; Charles Island in Milford, Connecticut; the Thimble Islands in Connecticut; Cockenoe Island in Westport, Connecticut; and on the island of Grand Manan in the Bay of Fundy.

Captain Kidd did bury a small cache of treasure on Gardiners Island in a spot known as Cherry Tree Field; however, it was removed by Governor Bellomont and sent to England to be used as evidence against Kidd

Now that was long and we've barely scratched Joseph Smith, but I think it's important to realize this treasure is still being sought after [300 years later](#) and debunked [300 years later](#).

Treasure Hunting Success via Glass Looking

So did they find any treasure?

Let's go into Glass looking success:

...

Yeah, no treasures found in the history of the world came from scrying, glass-looking or seerstones. None. Zero. Nothing with any evidence or even pictures posted online.

Scrying is not supported by science as a method of predicting the future. Some critics consider it to be a pseudoscience. Skeptics consider scrying to be the result of delusion or wishful thinking.

Psychologist Leonard Zusne suggested that scrying images are hallucinations or hypnagogic experiences.

A 2010 paper in the journal Perception[10] identified one specific method of reliably reproducing a scrying illusion in a mirror and hypothesized that it "might be caused by low level fluctuations in the stability of edges, shading and outlines affecting the perceived definition of the face, which gets over-interpreted as 'someone else' by the face recognition system."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scrying#Scientific_reception

Forget the rocks, Oliver also had a dowsing rod... maybe it was all in the rod?

Well, they also used dowsing rods right? Maybe those were effective?

[People still do this and post it to YouTube.](#)

[Popular Mechanics](#) features an advert for dowsing treasure hunters.

Although [treasure hunting websites list numerous finds](#) finding actual reports of treasures recovered is very difficult.

In 1949, an experiment was conducted in Maine by the American Society for Psychical Research. Twenty-seven dowsers "failed completely to estimate either the depth or the amount of water to be found in a field free of surface clues to water, whereas a geologist and an engineer successfully predicted the depth at which water would be found in 16 sites in the same field...." (Zusne and Jones 1989: 108; reported in Vogt and Hyman: 1967).

But dowsing has its own set of apologists. Oh yes. And so any number of excuses as to why it fails. In fact, dowsing was put under test by James Randi himself:

Typical is what happened when James Randi tested some dowsers using a protocol they all agreed upon. If they could locate water in underground pipes at an 80% success rate they would get \$10,000 (now the prize is over \$1,000,000). All the dowsers failed the test, though each claimed to be highly successful in finding water using a variety of non-scientific instruments, including a pendulum. Says Randi, "the sad fact is that dowsers are no better at finding water than anyone else. Drill a well almost anywhere in an area where water is geologically possible, and you will find it."

(One should remember this when hearing the "Miracle" where Joseph dug for water in a field on Zion's March.)

I find successes like recorded by the ["Idaho Treasure Hunters"](#) to be less convincing as any number of clear biases are present in the examples given. And despite hundreds of books and websites declaring success at finding treasure via dowsing, [not one of the largest treasure finds to date were found via dowsing](#). I think that is telling. In fact:

[Dowsing has entirely failed scientific rigor.](#)

This should be disturbing when one realizes that Father Smith consecrated dowsing rods in the [Kirtland Temple](#).

Let us return to our friends at FAIRMormon:

Joseph and his family viewed folk magic and the use of seer stones as not falling under Biblical condemnation. It is clear that Joseph and his contemporaries believed that one could gain knowledge from such activities as dowsing (using a rod to find water, ore, or buried treasure) and the use of the seer stones. This does not mean, however, that Joseph understood such activities to be a form of magic.

In Joseph's day, the power of (for example) dowsing was seen as a manifestation of "how the world worked." An article published in 1825 described how the downward bob of a divining rode "closely resembles the dip of the magnetic needle, when traversing a bed of ore." A journal of science reported the idea that "the rod is influenced by ores."

An early British dowser denounced the idea that dowsing for ore was based on magic. "it [the rod] guided me to the Orifice of a lead mine. [The rod is] of kin to the Load-stone [magnet], drawing Iron to it by a secret virtue, inbred by nature, and not by any conjuration as some have fondly imagined."

Using a divining rod was seen in these examples as a manifestation of natural law, and requiring the grace of God to operate

Thus, divining was seen in these examples as a manifestation of natural law...

It is further clear that those who used divinization by rods, for example, believed that the rod's natural ability also required the grace of God to operate. Hence, practitioners would consecrate their rods, and pray to God to bless their efforts... As he [Joseph] told Brigham Young, "most...who do find [a seer stone] make an evil use of it." And, Emma Smith's hostile brother Alvah would later remember that Joseph told him "that his gift in seeing with a [seer] stone and hat, was a gift from God."

(source:http://en.fairmormon.org/Joseph_Smith/Money_digging/Was_this_a_blot_on_his_character)

With the recent publishing of the [documents relating to the 1826 trial of Joseph Smith for glass looking on Joseph Smith Papers](#) and the [history of Joseph Smith's treasure hunting](#) and [Joseph Smith himself stating he was a treasure hunter but only made about 14 dollars a day at it](#), it is never mentioned what a bad perpetration this would be for a prophet. Imagine you went to school for your trade only everything taught in the school was disproved by science and it never once produced the promised result. Would that be a good teaching device for further learning? What does it say about God that He will use an invalid, mystic load of bullshit to prepare his one true prophet?

In Addition, Phineas Young (In-law to Oliver Cowdery, and Brother to Brigham) went to Oliver to obtain his dowsing rod. He then gave it to Brigham, and according to Phineas (someone there is no reason to doubt) was used by Brigham as a dowsing rod when he said his famous "This is the place" about building the Salt Lake Temple:

In the revelation to Oliver Cowdery in May 1829, Bro. [B. H.] Roberts said that the gift which the Lord says he has in his hand meant a stick which was like Aaron's Rod. It is said Bro. Phineas Young [brother-in-law of Oliver Cowdery and brother of Brigham Young] got it from him [Cowdery] and gave it to President Young who had it with him when he arrived in this [Salt Lake] valley and that it was with that stick that he pointed out where the Temple should be built. (Anthon H. Lund journal entry for 5 July, 1901)

But wait, that comes from some "Lund" guy quoting Phineas so being good historians we should find a second source:

[\[Brigham\] Young selects the site of the Salt Lake Temple by using Oliver Cowdery's divining rod.](#)

So diving rods were key not only to training up Joseph, but on into the Brighamite branch of Mormonism that would one day morph into the LDS version we have today. God really, really wanted men who would use completely useless, fake methods of touching the divine to prepare them for future communication and action, I guess.

Conclusion

I find it fascinating that will all the talk by apologists that the seerstone and dowsing rods were ways for God to prepare Joseph, they never once discuss the complete inefficacy of the objects to the design given them. No significant treasures found. Even Captain Kidd's treasure that inspired a genre of treasure hunting novels is still unfound despite all the dowsing rods, scrying stones and prophets out there today.

In addition Joseph didn't just use the rods before becoming prophet. He consecrated or blessed (or something) various rods and handed them out for [missions in 1837](#), so it is disingenuous to say it was just to prepare him. He clearly believed and used these useless tools of humbuggery throughout his life.

[Mr. Uchtdorf, one of those who claim to be apostles of the LDS church recently published that the seerstone used in treasure finding is "Like a smart phone"](#) and yet iPhones are used to [find treasures](#) via [Geocaching](#) all the time. Five minutes and Google and you'll see thousands of real treasures. I've yet to see pictures or video of finding actual treasure via seerstones or dowsing yet.

Maybe dowsing and seerstones are true because they hate Google as much as the LDS church does? Uchtdorf himself hasn't even turned up a single pound sterling from Captain Kidd despite his personal claim that the stone is like an iPhone. If God can't Geocache as well as [Randall Monroe](#) maybe God should get out of the treasure business altogether.

TL;DR: Joseph knew about Captain Kidd's treasure. He looked for treasure via methods disproven to be effective. Apologists said god prepped Joseph via these shitty tools. What kind of bastard God would prepare His one true prophet via dysfunctional methods?

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: Y is for...

Young. Specifically that the LDS, FLDS, Singer-Swap, Allred, and Kingston groups all depend upon the legitimacy of Young's succession of Smith to be credible. We will review the science used in approaching this claim, as well as historical interest points that inform the concepts related to Brigham's legitimacy.

From the outset, I'm going to admit that there really is too much to cover on this one, as historians have made this their full time careers for lifetimes both for and against Brigham. Let this be an introduction to further study if nothing else.

It was a crisis – First and foremost I want to point out it was not called the success picnic. Despite what you'll learn from any religion, their way was not the obvious one to most members. In fact, it was so confusing that Brigham himself didn't know who should lead the church. Anyone who tells you that succession was clear-cut is bastardizing history and frankly [lying to your face in a salesman sort of way](#). ([Succession Crisis Wiki](#)) things to note:

- "[T]he administrative and ecclesiastical organization of the new church evolved from an egalitarian group of believers to an institution based on hierarchy of priesthood offices." In fact Elders were, at one point, in the Aaronic Priesthood. The whole thing developed over time and was not revealed in a whole, completed state.
- "...[T]he church was "organized" rather than legally "incorporated," its property needed to be held in trust by a trustee; Smith became the church's Trustee-in-Trust." Which means that he really owned everything. That plays a key part into succession.
- "March 1832, Smith created a quorum of three presidents known as the First Presidency... Sidney Rigdon became counselor". This is pretty key too. The first Presidency role didn't exist until 2 years after the church was organized, and Sidney was in the First Presidency from the beginning. Brigham wasn't even a member at this point
- December 18, 1833, Smith created the office of "Patriarch over the Church". Hyrum was in this role at the time of Smith's death and it would have taken over the church if Hyrum hadn't been killed. Church Patriarch existed as a calling until 1979 but it lost the ability to take over with Brigham.
- February 17, 1834, Smith created a High Council in Kirtland, Ohio. This body consisted of twelve men, headed by the First Presidency. The Kirtland High Council took on the role of chief judicial and legislative body of the local church and handled such things as excommunication trials and approval of all church spending.
- The thing of note with the High Council is that it could overrule the prophet
- But there was another High Council, because it isn't confusing enough; on July 3, 1834, the High Council of Zion was organized in Far West, Jackson County, Missouri. This High Council in Zion is also known as the Presiding High Council, for it was designated to preside over the council established in Kirtland, as well as all future High Councils at the various Stakes of Zion
- February 14, 1835, nearly one year after the Kirtland High Council was organized, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world".... Initially, the Quorum of the Twelve was subordinate to the High Council of Zion; for example, in 1838, when vacancies arose in the quorum, it was the Standing Presiding High Council at Far West that filled the vacancies

Got that? The High Council was superior in rank to the Twelve, and the Twelve were just traveling salesmen. They were to minister locally when home, but they didn't have much else as a role to play. Just, the salesmen for the religion.

"Prophet, Seer, Revelator, and Translator," "President of the Church," "President of the First Presidency," and "Trustee-in-Trust" of the Church. It was unclear if all of these offices should be held together by any one successor and it was equally unclear who such a successor should be.

Who could possibly fill Joseph's Shoes?

Hyrum Smith – Contemporary statements of Church leaders indicate that had Smith's brother Hyrum survived, he would have been the successor. Hyrum had been ordained Assistant President of the Church and Presiding Patriarch of the church, and the successor of Oliver Cowdery, who had been excommunicated. But he was dead too.

Samuel Smith – Following the principle of lineal succession, Smith's younger brother Samuel was the next potential candidate in line. Sometime between June 23–27, 1844, Smith reportedly stated that

"if he and Hyrum were taken away, Samuel H. Smith would be his successor".

But Samuel died; either from illness or from poison by Hosea Stout.

William Smith – The last of the surviving Smith brothers, William, initially claimed the right to succeed his brothers only as Presiding Patriarch. But uh, they got in fist fights, and no one much liked William. And he kinda accused Brigham of poisoning Samuel, so no one really followed him.

Joseph Smith III – Joseph Smith also seems to have given indications that one of his sons would succeed him. Several church leaders later claimed that on August 27, 1834, and April 22, 1839, Joseph Smith indicated his eldest son, Joseph Smith III, would be his successor. At the time of Smith's death, Joseph Smith III was eleven years old.

Reportedly, Porter Rockwell broke Joseph Smith III into Liberty Jail to get a blessing of succession in case Joseph was never freed from the prison. [Porter Rockwell breaking into the jail is not in question. Smuggling a kid into the jail is not a question. The blessing is not a question.](#) Yet somehow no one in the LDS hierarchy talks about this line of succession... I wonder why?

Er...no one but Gordon B. Hinkley. But we'll get there.

Oliver Cowdery – Had been the "Second Elder" of the church after Joseph Smith ... but had been excommunicated on April 12, 1838.

David Whitmer, second prophet of this dispensation – David Whitmer had been ordained President of the High Council in Zion (Jackson County, Missouri), and Joseph had blessed him on July 7, 1834,

"to be a leader or a prophet to this Church, which (ordination) was on condition that he (J. Smith) did not live to God himself".

If anyone tries to tell you that D&C verse about Joseph living to be 80 was just theoretical, I want you to cite the above. Before there was a higher priesthood; before the temple was dedicated, David Whitmer was ordained to be second prophet based on whether Joseph would see God return as per that verse in the D&C. Sounds pretty literal.

"Whitmer, however, separated from the Mormons in June 1838".

This is very carefully worded. Note they don't say he was excommunicated like Oliver. He was, but he was excommunicated over minor infractions and restored to blessings as before... so they skip over that.

What happened in June 1838? The Kirtland Safety Society. David Whitmer had joined up in those who felt the saints should pay their debts on the temple. So the second prophet hadn't really "left the saints", the Saints had, in fact, left them. They stayed in Kirtland; while everyone tried to escape debt heading to Missouri. Does wanting to pay debts remove someone from being a legitimate prophet?

Sidney Rigdon – As the surviving member of the First Presidency, Sidney had a legitimate claim. As early as April 19, 1834, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had:

"laid hands upon bro. Sidney [Rigdon] and confirmed upon him the blessings of wisdom and knowledge to preside over the Church in the absence of brother Joseph"

In the spring of 1844, Joseph Smith had begun running a third-party candidacy to be elected President of the United States. Sidney Rigdon was nominated as Smith's Vice Presidential running mate and had moved to Pennsylvania to establish legal residency there (the United States Constitution dictates that electors must vote for candidates for the President and Vice President from separate states). Upon receiving word of Smith's death, Rigdon claimed to receive a revelation calling him to succeed Smith as "guardian" of the church and he hurriedly returned to Nauvoo to exercise his claim.

Perhaps more importantly, Sidney's names were on the deeds to all the church held property that weren't in Emma's name (Joseph had transferred several properties to her name just before his death). Sidney literally owned the church.

William Marks – Nauvoo Stake President William Marks was president of the High Council at the time. Smith's widow, Emma urged Marks to succeed Smith as President and Trustee-in-Trust of the church, but Marks supported the claims of Rigdon.

Brigham Young – Actually had one of the weakest claims. The Quorum of the Twelve were originally ordained to be traveling ministers, and had been delegated leadership of outlying areas of the world in which no "stakes" — local congregations — were established. By revelation, the Twelve, as a body, had authority equal to the First Presidency, the Presiding High Council, and the Quorum of Seventy. However, revelation stated:

"twelve apostles have no right to go into Zion or any of its stakes where there is a regular high council established, to regulate any matter pertaining thereto".

In later years, however, Smith had given the Twelve a greater role in governing the Church, charging them with running the church's "temporal business", and admitting many of them to the Council of Fifty, his closest body of political advisers, and the Anointed Quorum, his closest body of theological advisers. *Brigham Young, in particular, became one of Smith's closest confidants, and occasionally took charge during the 1840s, in Smith's absence.*

So Brigham took charge once in a while when Joseph was traveling or otherwise indisposed. But by revelation didn't have presiding authority. So how then did the LDS have claim? But first one other group who could have had claim upon succession:

The Council of Fifty – A group of trusted men, some of them non-Mormon, who campaigned for Smith's 1844 run for President of the United States, and sought the establishment of a theocratic government... In a meeting of the Council of Fifty in the spring of 1844, Smith told those with him,

"I roll the burthen [burden] and responsibility of leading this Church off from my shoulders on to yours," Joseph Smith proclaimed. "Now, round up your shoulders and stand under it like men; for the Lord is going to let me rest a while".

How did Brigham and the LDS church claim the church then?!

Joseph died June 27th, 1844.

August 3rd – Rigdon returns to Nauvoo and the next day announces at a public meeting that he has received a revelation appointing him "Guardian of the Church." William Marks says they will hold a council on August 8th to decide the issue.

August 6 - Brigham Young and the rest of the Twelve returned to Nauvoo; the next day, they met with Sidney Rigdon, who repeated his claim to become the guardian of the Church. Brigham Young responded,

"Joseph conferred upon our heads all the keys and powers belonging to the apostleship which he himself held before he was taken away."

This is the first time it is suggested the twelve would lead the church at all. In all of history. Period. Young tried diligently to persuade the people that he alone held the rights to lead the Church. He even went so far as to ride through the streets on Smith's favorite horse named Joe Duncan.

August 8th Conference – At the conference on August 8, Rigdon spoke first to the assembled (90 minutes!), asking the saints to confirm his role as "guardian." To back his claim, Rigdon cited his long relationship with Smith and the fact that he was the only surviving member of the First Presidency. Rigdon argued also that Smith had sent him to Pennsylvania to prevent the entire presidency from being killed in the ongoing conflict.

Young called for a recess of two and a half hours. When the conference resumed, Young spoke, emphasizing the idea that no man could ever replace Joseph Smith. However, he stated that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had all the "keys of the priesthood" that Smith had held. He answered Rigdon's proposal to be named "guardian" by claiming that Rigdon and Smith had become estranged in recent years. Rather than a single guardian, Young proposed that the Quorum of the Twelve be named the church's leadership.

So how on earth did Rigdon lose? This is a wild claim out of left field.

Rigdon declined an offer to rebut Young, asking W.W. Phelps to speak for him. Instead Phelps spoke in favor of Young's proposal.

It all came down to Rigdon relying on someone who betrayed him for Young. And what did W.W. Phelps know that made him rely on Young over Rigdon?

In short, **polygamy**. [Phelps was endowed on December 9, 1843](Anderson & Bergera 2005, pp. 63–64) received his "second anointing" promising him godhood on February 2, 1844. And with second anointing comes the knowledge of polygamy in that day and age.

And he knew that Sidney was against it and that Brigham was part of these secret ceremonies. In addition, many of the saints had been converted by the twelve. They knew them personally and would stand behind them.

So did they, in fact, vote Brigham in? Yes.

The assembled church members then voted by common consent on whether or not to accept the Twelve as the new leaders over the church. The majority voted in favor of the Twelve.

What isn't covered in LDS History though:

Those who opposed the vote against Young were all later excommunicated from the Nauvoo church.

How nice.

What about Brigham looking like Joseph? I thought there was a miracle that made people follow Brigham, including a whistling broken tooth?

The following people said this:

This seems to be the earliest account. About a year after the meeting we get the first mention of Brigham turning in Joseph; and it hardly includes whistling teeth and such:

15 November 1844 (3 months after) - Henry and Catharine Brooke statement referring generally to Young bearing the greatest resemblance to Smith.

The next account comes about a year later:

"But their [Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith's] places were filled by others much better than I once supposed they could have been, the spirit of Joseph appeared to rest upon Brigham" William Burton Diary, May 1845. LDS Church Archives

The biggest collection of accounts seems to be here:

Lynne Watkins Jorgensen, ["The Mantle of the Prophet Joseph Smith Passes to Brother Brigham: One Hundred Twenty-one Testimonies of a Collective Spiritual Witness"](#)

Some of the best ones are below, note almost all of them are long, long after the fact, and the tale grows with each telling:

But as soon as he spoke I jumped upon my feet, for in every possible degree it was Joseph's voice, and his person, in look, attitude, dress and appearance; [it] was Joseph himself, personified and I knew in a moment the spirit and mantle of Joseph was upon him. Benjamin F. Johnson, [My Life's Review \[Independence, 1928\], p. 103-104](#)

Although only a boy, I saw the mantle of the Prophet Joseph rest upon Brigham Young; and he arose lion-like to the occasion and led the people forth. [Life Story of Mosiah Hancock, p. 23, BYU Library](#)

If I had not seen him with my own eyes, there is no one that could have convinced me that it was not Joseph Smith. Wilford Woodruff, Deseret News, 15 March 1892

When Brigham Young spoke it was with the voice of Joseph himself; and not only was it the voice of Joseph which was heard, but it seemed in the eyes of the people as though it was the every person

of Joseph which stood before them. George Q. Cannon, [Juvenile Instructor](#), 22 [29 October 1870]: 174-175

Van Wagoner argues there are no known contemporary records of:

An explicit transfiguration, a physical metamorphosis of Brigham Young into the form and voice of Joseph Smith and that [w]hen 8 August 1844 is stripped of emotional overlay, there is not a shred of irrefutable contemporary evidence to support the occurrence of a mystical event either in the morning or afternoon gatherings of that day.

Nobody took notes that mentioned anything of the sort, not in the official minutes (which we have), not in a personal journal that night, not in Wilford-never-hit-the-pillow-without-writing Woodruff's journal.

You've just restated the wiki-article on Succession; is there anything else?

Sure. We just need to establish that Brigham had a very weak claim. Thus we should evaluate the following data and claims of Brigham based on the idea that no one thought the Apostles should lead until Brigham rushed home and proposed it a few days before the Saints were expected to vote.

Elections always lose votes in the mail

Have you noticed that the U.S. Mail service can [deliver fish, live animals and even, on one occasion, a human child mailed as a check](#) but as soon as an [election comes, several hundred thousands of votes per state are lost in that same mail service?](#)

Similarly, there were a ton of "Saints" who weren't at the meeting whose votes were not counted. "A Majority" of people in that meeting, which [some said that as many as six thousand Saints were at the meeting grounds east of the rising temple that Sunday](#). The assumption was that those 3,000 who voted in favor of Brigham spoke for the full number of Saints, which is recorded to be about 26,000. Now there were about 12,000 in Nauvoo; so if the meeting was unanimous that would be about half the Nauvoo population, but we know there were non-Mormons included in Nauvoo, so it's likely that 3,000 members spoke for everyone, and God was told whom He had chosen.

Brigham as a choice

But we're not just here to discuss the succession crisis. No, the Wikipedia articles and books handle that just fine. We're here to evaluate Young after the crisis.

Young stated he wasn't the Prophet

I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet... Fred C. Collier, ed., *The Office Journal of Brigham Young, 1858-1863*, Book D (Hanna, UT: Collier's Publishing Co., 2006), 5.

You are now without a prophet present with you in the flesh to guide you; but you are not without apostles, who hold the keys...to preside over all the affairs of the church in all the world...to build up the kingdom upon the foundation that the Prophet Joseph has laid, who still holds the keys of this last dispensation, and will hold them to all eternity, as a king and priest unto the most high God, ministering in heaven...Let no man presume for a moment that his place will be filled by another...the Twelve Apostles of this dispensation stand in their own place and always will, both in

time and in eternity... (Epistle of the Twelve, signed by BY, August 15, 1844, Times and Seasons 5:618)

You cannot call a man to be prophet...You cannot take any man and put him at the head. (BY, HoC 7:233)

I am not going to interpret dreams; for **I don't profess to be such a Prophet as were Joseph Smith and Daniel**; but I am a Yankee guesser; Brigham Young, Sermon, July 26, 1857, JD 5:77

A person was mentioned to-day who did not believe that Brigham Young was a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator. I wish to ask every member of this whole community, if they ever heard him profess to be a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, as Joseph Smith was?...Who ordained me to be First President of this Church on earth? I answer, It is the choice of this people, and that is sufficient. (Brigham Young, April 7, 1852, Journal of Discourses, 6:320)

I have never particularly desired any man to testify publicly that I am a Prophet; nevertheless, if any man feels joy, in doing this, he shall be blest in it. I have never said that I am not a Prophet; but, if I am not, one thing is certain, I have been very profitable to this people. Brigham Young, Sermon, October, 7, 1864, JD 10:339

Mary Rollins Lightner was one of Joseph's wives, but as such, she later wrote, only as a result of her confrontation with an Angel. She remembered a bit of a conflict with Brigham in the waning days of Nauvoo and wrote that

He [Brigham] said he would give anything to have seen what I had. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Autobiography, in B. Carmon Hardy, ed., *Doing the Works of Abraham: Mormon Polygamy: It's Origin, Practice, and Demise* (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark Co., 2007), 48.

Susan Young Gates recorded that when asked if he had ever seen the Savior, Brigham responded that he hadn't, and that he didn't expect to until he died. Note, 1885, Susa Young Gates Collection, Box 11, Folder 1, Subfolder 1, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City.

No revelation, no angels, no vision of the savior by his own confession to those intimate with him. He noted that those who had such visions had "Fallen away" while ignoring David Whitmer having actually been called a prophet by the laying on of Hands by Joseph Smith, which Brigham had never had:

In a Sermon delivered at the Tabernacle in 1860, Brigham spoke of "the characters of Oliver Cowdrey, Martin Harris, and others, [and then] noticed that men, who have been natural Seers, and had many other remarkable gifts, had fallen away, principally because they had not Sufficient humility. Brigham Young, Sermon, April 7, 1852, JD 6:319-320.

To be fair, he was re-sustained as a prophet, seer and revelator. When the First Presidency and Twelve were re-baptized in the Endowment House font, each member of the First Presidency was re-ordained and commissioned as prophets, seers and revelators. Wilford Woodruff Journal, 4:460-461

-----**Rejected Doctrines by... almost everyone**-----

Polygamy

Now rejected by the church and buried under the sound-bite "...haven't practiced it for over 100 years", [Brigham had 55 wives](#). He had at least three when Joseph was martyred. "But..." says the believing member, "...in the world they don't marry them, they just have sex. Polygamy meant the women were taken care of". Let's examine that claim using the example of one of Brigham's wives:

[Augusta Adams, disappointed at being one of many, wrote scores of letters to her husband complaining of financial and sexual neglect](#), expressing jealousy of other wives, and even swearing at Young. Still, when outsiders portrayed Mormon women as slaves of their husbands, Adams sharply defended plural marriage in public forums.

Outsiders reported even [Brigham's wives living in poverty](#) and that's even among the ones he was public with (only about 22 or so). Feminist Mormon Housewives did a podcast on the houses of the favorite wives vs. the rest: <http://feministmormonhousewivespodcast.org/year-of-polygamy-houses-of-polygamy-episode-45/> But beyond him pushing his own wives into poverty he, he was quite adamant that this was a requirement for heaven in this life, something rejected in the modern church essay:

Now if any of you will deny the plurality of wives, and continue to do so, I promise that you will be damned, (Journal of Discourses, vol. 3, p. 266). Also, "The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy," (Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, p. 269).

Misogyny

I prayed my Heavenly Father that I may receive it [President Young's words] in honesty, especially the principle that *a woman, be she ever so smart, she cannot know more than her husband if he magnifies his priesthood*. That God never in any, any age of the world endowed woman with knowledge above the man. Martha Spence Heywood's journal

Thomas Bullock on the same instance:

The lack in the government of children is mothers do not correct the children when they should be and husbands so same by their wives. *There is not a man who magnifies his priesthood but has more knowledge than his wife*. Love the Lord first and don't stop to ask your wife

Great God! Could women trammel me in this manner? NO! All their council & wisdom (although there are many good women) don't weigh as much with me as the weight of a Fly Tird. Excuse me for my vulgarity. It is not common for me to use such Language, but I know of no Language to mean to suit the case before us. It is not a woman's place to council her Husband & the moment a man follows a woman he is led astray & will go down to Hell unless he retracts his steps. (Cleland and Brooks, John D. Lee, 1:5-7.)

Divine Sex

Another idea that was taught by Brigham that has been basically rejected is that God had sex with Mary:

The birth of the Savior was as natural as the births of our children; it was the result of natural action. He partook of flesh and blood--was begotten of his Father, as we were of our fathers. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 8, p. 115).

When the time came that His first-born, the Saviour, should come into the world and take a tabernacle, the Father came Himself and favoured that spirit with a tabernacle instead of letting any other man do it, (Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, p. 218).

The birth of the Savior was as natural as are the births of our children; it was the result of natural action. He partook of flesh and blood--was begotten of his Father, as we were of our fathers. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 8, p. 115).

Note: the late Bruce McConkie who was a member of the First Council of the Seventy stated "There is nothing figurative about his paternity; he was begotten, conceived and born in the normal and natural course of events . . ." (Mormon Doctrine, by Bruce McConkie, p. 742).

I have given you a few leading items upon this subject, but a great deal more remains to be told. Now, remember from this time forth, and forever, that Jesus Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, p. 51).

Racism

Now that the church has published the Essay stating that priesthood prevention defined by race was simply an idea of leadership at the time, we should mention whose idea that was. It is hard to state that Joseph excluded people from the priesthood by race because, in fact; he did give the priesthood to members of various races. So we should lay this squarely on Brigham's back. In fact, we can even point out he identified the "mark of Cain" specifically:

Brigham Young - The mark of Cain is a flat nose and black skin. — Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, p. 290 (October 9, 1859)

Brigham Young - The curse will remain on blacks so that they can never hold the Mormon priesthood until all other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood. — Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, p. 291 (October 9, 1859)

...a man who has the Affrican blood in him cannot hold one jot nor tittle of preisthood...

Including stating that giving the priesthood to individuals of different races would mean the church was in apostasy:

...On that very day, and hour we should do so, the preisthood is taken from this Church and kingdom and God leaves us to our fate. The moment we consent to mingle with the seed of Cain the Church must go to desstruction,

He was quite vocal on the subject and leaves no question as to his stance. This is not ambiguous.

But for Brigham it went beyond church, he also refused to let someone, based on race, be in government:

Therefore I will not consent for one moment to have an african dictate me or any Bren. with regard to Church or State Government. (ibid)

Bad Prophet

Sometimes Brigham was just bad at being a prophet. Here are some selected examples where he was just plain, and measurably so, wrong.

Brigham Young - A person of Jewish blood will always apostatize from the LDS faith. — Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, p. 142 (December 12, 1854)

Brigham Young - Before 26 years go by LDS elders will be as much thought of as kings on their thrones. — Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, p. 40 (August 31, 1856)

Brigham Young - The present struggle (Civil War) will not free the descendants of Ham who are slaves. — Journal of Discourses, vol. 10, p. 250 (October 6, 1863)

Brigham Young - "as the Lord lives we will build up Jackson County in this generation" — Times & Seasons, vol. 6, p. 956 (April 6, 1845)

I am here to answer. I shall be on hand to answer when I am called upon, for all the counsel and for all the instruction that I have given to this people. If there is an Elder here, or any member of this Church, called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who can bring up the first idea, the first sentence that I have delivered to the people as counsel that is wrong, I really wish they would do it; but they cannot do it, for the simple reason that I have never given counsel that is wrong; this is the reason. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 16, p. 161).

Adam-God

Another idea that has been totally rejected by the modern church but was taught over [37 years by Brigham is the concept of Adam-God](#).

Blood Atonement

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood_atonement.

Oath of Vengeance being part of the temple

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oath_of_vengeance

-----end of rejected doctrines-----

Journal of Discourses

"But..." says the believing member, "You're just sourcing the Journal of Discourses, and we don't believe that's doctrine." But, here's the rub, Brigham did believe it.

I say now, when they [his discourses] are copied and approved by me they are as good Scripture as is couched in this Bible... (Journal of Discourses, vol. 13, p. 264; see also p. 95).

Now, our straw TBM takes a different tact. "But these aren't science or historical, this is doctrinal detail". My point in bringing this all up is that over history, his doctrines have all been rejected by the LDS branch and can be visibly seen as racist, bigoted, and backward. He clearly makes bad professions and even admitted he wasn't a prophet on many occasions. The theology is informed by the historical context.

Now, let's take some time to review historical pieces that have nothing to do with doctrine:

Human Rights Violations

Young was the first governor and superintendent of Indian affairs, serving until 1858. Under his jurisdiction: In 1849, the Mormon settlers were having many horses and cattle stolen by Indians. In response, Brigham Young sent out a militia company to end the depredations. The militia surrounded the small Ute band of Little Chief and engaged in a four-hour battle in which all four warriors were killed.

Terrikee sent his people away. However, he was killed by a Mormon farmer who thought that the chief was trying to steal corn. In retaliation, the Shoshones killed a Mormon settler.

In 1850, following an argument over a stolen shirt, Mormon settlers in Utah Valley killed a Ute known as Old Bishop, stuffed his stomach with rocks, and threw his body into the Provo River.

This led to the Ute band of Big Elk which had been weakened by an epidemic coming into conflict with the Mormon Militia. The Utes retreated with the sick and wounded, taking refuge in a nearby canyon. About 40 Utes were killed and the militia commander, who was under orders to take no prisoners, killed those who surrendered. The women and children were herded into an open stockade. Even though it was winter, they were fed slop in troughs like beasts. The captive children were distributed among the Mormons, to be brought up in the habits of a Christian life.

In 1850 the best land was to be taken by Mormon settlers without payment. The Indians were to be strictly excluded from Mormon settlements. Stealing by Indians was often to bring swift punishment, including death. (<http://nativeamericannetroots.net/diary/672>) Walker War 1853.

You can get rid of more Indians with a sack of flour than a keg of powder.

Is a quote that worked its way deep into the mindset of the Utah Indians. It is still quoted today; although I can find no contemporary source. However, he did say

"It is better and cheaper to feed and clothe the Indians, than to kill them."

As with everything, context matters here. Specifically that this is after the Walker War in 1853. By this point he was also saying:

The Indians in these mountains are continually on the decrease; bands that numbered 150 warriors when we [p.171] first came here, number not more than 35 now; and some of the little tribes in the southern parts of this territory, towards New Mexico, have not a single squaw amongst them, for they have traded them off for horses, &c. This practice will soon make the race extinct. Besides, Walker is continually, whenever an opportunity presents itself, killing and stealing children from the wandering bands that he has any power over, which also has its tendency to extinguish the race. (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 1, p.171)

So let's consider the context, they've killed by biological or outright warfare 150 down to 35 of every producing male in the society, and then they are buying children (that's human trafficking) off of the decimated society. You see Indian society depended on the entire village. Take, if you will; a medieval village. One blacksmith, one tanner, a baker, several farmers. If you kill off all but 23% of the village, the remaining will struggle to survive. A blacksmith cannot necessarily replace a farmer and vice versa.

Indian culture was even more dependent on each person having a role. No exchange of coins or monetary economy, but an economy built on the needs of the tribe. With such losses, the Indians were destitute and Brigham's solution? Buy the children with food.

So yes Brigham said to feed Indians, but that typically involved killing the men, and buying women and children that remained with that food.

Part of his legacy: [Blackhawk war](#)

Now, I can hear the echo of our Straw TBM "But he was just doing what was necessary in that day". God seems to be very morally relativistic. Strang, Rigdon, Joseph Smith III, and David Whitmer all alternatives to Young did not commit human rights violations, despite being contemporary to Young, and having the same scriptures implying Indians deserved the punishments the Saints gave them. Think about that.

Suppression of religion through use of force: [Morrisites war](#) With authorization of Utah's acting governor Frank Fuller, a military-sized (between 200 and 1000 men) Mormon "posse" attacks schismatic community of Joseph Morris in Weber County, Utah. The "Morrisites" had imprisoned three apostate "spies." When negotiations stall the posse fires a cannon into the Morrisite congregation killing two women and leaving seventeen-year-old Mary Christofferson's chin dangling by a flap of skin. The Morrisites return fire and the "Morrisite war" begins.

[Mountain Meadows Massacre](#) of innocents and brainwashing of children by the murders. Many may say that Brigham didn't order it, but his constant rhetoric of violence and including the oath of vengeance at the veil of the temple certainly contributed. Remember his words at the site "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord".

Treason

LDS members are typically only taught about the part of Johnson's army where they ride in, see the town stuffed with hay to be ignited, comment on the weirdness of a wall around a plowed field, and then ride out again. There's a bit more to the story:

During the [Utah War](#). Brigham Young had declared succession from the United States in August 2, 1857

Brigham Young publicly discusses the possible secession of the Mormon theocracy from the United States and the establishment of an independent kingdom (Young 1857b, p. 98) three days later he declared Martial Law.

Sept 6, 1857 – Brigham Young, in a sermon, declares that the Almighty recognizes Mormon Utah as a free and independent people, no longer bound by the laws of the United States.

An important note is that in July of 1857, Brigham had it confirmed he had been relieved as Governor and Johnson's army was on the way to enforce it.

Early August, Young re-activated the Nauvoo Legion under the command of Daniel H. Wells consisting of all able-bodied men between 15 and 60. Young ordered the Legion to take delaying actions, essentially harassing federal troops.

15th September, 1857 - "all the forces in said Territory hold themselves in readiness to march at a moment's notice to repel any and all such invasion." -Brigham Young declares in a martial law notice

In April - The commission offered a free pardon to the Mormons for any acts incident to the conflict if they would submit to government authority. This included a pardon to Brigham Young for acts of treason. Not that he was innocent. There wasn't a trial. But that he was pardoned despite committing acts of treason. Joseph Smith III, David Whitmer, Sydney Rigdon, and James Strang all did not require pardons from the federal government for treason.

Temple Lot Case and End of the LDS church

Would a true prophet get his church ended by the United States Supreme court?
Brigham argued that his was the true branch and in the temple lot case it was determined that he was not the legitimate successor [Temple Lot Dissertation](#)

Further, the Supreme Court ended the church in 1890 based mostly on Doctrines and actions of Brigham's day that continued:

[Supreme Court vs. Late Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints](#)

Conclusion

Brigham comes with a lot of baggage. It is not clear he was the successor and LDS members should be cautious defending a man the modern LDS church has tossed aside in their current essays.

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism: Z is for...

Zelph. I mean, it had to be done. It's a point of data that is scientifically provable (we can go back to the very mound Joseph Smith had them dig in) that has existed before there was even a temple and higher priesthood.

That would suffice, but we're going to take a different tact as any number of Exmormon, Heartland Mormon and non-Mormon researchers have done so. We shall ask:

- What things that are commonly believed in the church have *Less Evidence* for them, than Zelph?
- What things should members reject if Zelph was the standard of evidence?
- What beliefs should be held if Zelph were legitimate?

In all actuality, Z is for "[Standard of Evidence](#)" using Zelph as a clear illustration of how one must shift the Standard of Evidence in order to maintain the current LDS narrative.

Zelph Background

From [Wikipedia](#):

Zelph (/zɛlf/) ([or, if you prefer in cartoon form](#)) is a figure of interest in Mormon studies. In May and June 1834 Joseph Smith led an expedition known as Zion's Camp...On June 3, while passing through west-central Illinois near Griggsville, some bones were unearthed from a mound. These bones were identified by Smith as belonging to a Lamanite chieftain-warrior named Zelph. The mound in question is now known as Naples-Russell Mound.

First: The information is precise enough that we can find the Mound. [That means we can carbon date, DNA test and excavate the area the skull was found at and actually test the claims of Smith.](#) This standard of evidence should be noted.

Sources

Heber C. Kimball

[O]n the top of this mound there was the appearance of three altars, which had been built of stone, one above another, according to the ancient order; and the ground was strewn over with human bones. This prompted Kimball and the others to dig into the mound after sending for a shovel and a hoe. At about one foot deep we discovered the skeleton of a man, almost entire; and between two of his ribs we found an Indian arrow, which had evidently been the cause of his death. We took the leg and thigh bones and carried them along with us to Clay County. All four appeared sound.

After continuing on their journey, Kimball reports that "[I]t was made known to Joseph that he had been an officer who fell in battle, in the last destruction among the Lamanites, and his name was Zelph. This caused us to rejoice much, to think that God was so mindful of us as to show these things to his servant. Brother Joseph had enquired of the Lord and it was made known in a vision."

Reuben McBride

Journal account states that "His name was Zelph a war[r]ior under the Prophet Onandagus. Zelph a white Laman[i]te." McBride also wrote that "an arrow was found in his Ribs...which he said he sup[p]osed oc[c]asioned his death." McBride wrote that Zelph "was known from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains."

Moses Martin

Soon after this Joseph had a vision and the Lord shewed him that this man was once a mighty Prophet and many other things concerning his dead which had fal[l]en no doubt in some great bat[t]les." Martin also described the skeleton "to be eight or nine feet tall because of the size of the thigh bone.

Levi Hancock

On the way to Illinois River where we camped on the west side in the morning, many went to see the big mound about a mile below the crossing, I did not go on it but saw some bones that was brought with a broken arrow, they was laid down by our camp Joseph addressed himself to Sylvester Smith, "This is what I told you and now I want to tell you that you may know what I meant; this land was called the land of desolation and Onendagus was the king and a good man was he, there in that mound did he bury his dead and did not dig holes as the people do now but they brought there dirt and covered them until you see they have raised it to be about one hundred feet high, the last man buried was Zelf, he was a white Lamanite who fought with the people of Onendagus for freedom, when he was young he was a great warrior and had his th[igh] broken and never was set, it knited together as you see on the side, he fought after it got strength untill he lost every tooth in his head save one when the Lord said he had done enough and suffered him to be killed by that arrow you took from his brest."

These words he said as the camp was moving of[f] the ground; as near as I could learn he had told them something about the mound and got them to go and see for themselves. I then remembered what he had said a few days before while passing many mounds on our way that was left of us; said he, "there are the bodies of wicked men who have died and are angry at us; if they can take the advantage of us they will, for if we live they will have no hope." I could not comprehend it but supposed it was all right.

George A. Smith

Much shorter than the other accounts. He gives the full date (Monday, June 2, 1834), tells of the height of the mound, and indicates Joseph Smith visited the mound the following morning.

Wilford Woodruff

Journal mentions that the bones were "probably" from the Lamanites and Nephites, even though the printed vision omitted the "probably."

While on our travels we visited many of the mounds which were flung up by the ancient inhabitants of this continent probably by the Nephites & Lamanites. We visited one of those Mounds and several of the brethren dug into it and took from it the bones of a man.

We visited one of those Mounds: considered to be 300 feet above the level of the Illinois river. Three persons dug into the mound & found a body. Elder Milton Holmes took the arrow out of the back

bones that killed Zelph & brought it with some of the bones in to the camp. I visited the same mound with Jesse J. Smith. Who the other persons were that dug in to the mound & found the body I am undecided.

Brother Joseph had a vision respecting the person. He said he was a white Lamanite. The curs was taken from him or at least in part. He was killed in battle with an arrow. The arrow was found among his ribs. One of his thigh bones was broken. This was done by a stone flung from a sling in battle years before his death. His name was Zelph. Some of his bones were brought into the Camp and the thigh bone which was broken was put into my waggon and I carried it to Missouri. Zelph was a large thick set man and a man of God. He was a warrior under the great prophet /Onandagus/ that was known from the hill Camorah /or east sea/ to the Rocky mountains. The above knowledge Joseph received in a vision.

Joseph Smith

Letter to Emma the day after he identified Zelph -

The whole of our journey, in the midst of so large a company of social honest and sincere men, wandering over the plains of the Nephites, recounting occasionally the history of the Book of Mormon, **roving over the mounds of that once beloved people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as a proof of its divine authenticity**, and gazing upon a country the fertility, the splendour and the goodness so indescribable, all serves to pass away time unnoticed.

Elder Burr Riggs

The brethren procured a shovel and a hoe, and removing the earth to the depth of about one foot, discovered the skeleton of a man, almost entire, and between his ribs the stone point of a Lamanitish arrow which evidently produced his death.

So we have at least 6 contemporary accounts; three apostle-level individuals who kept it in their daily journals, and a letter from the Prophet himself that back up the events and most of the details from at least two sources if not more. This is actually codified in the History of the Church.

So why don't we learn about Zelph in Sunday school then?

In 1842 Willard Richards compiled a number of records in order to produce a history of the church. Among the records examined were the various accounts related to Zelph. In the process of combining the accounts, Richards crossed out Woodruff's references to "hill Cumorah," and Heber C. Kimball's reference to the "last" great struggle with the Lamanites." Before Joseph was dead, and while he was starting to ramp up his wife-ratio to one every 25 days; the Zelph story already had enough evidence against it that church historians were altering the original accounts.

FAIRMormon has long counter argued the Zelph story

Williams Hamblin

There are many difficulties that make it nearly impossible for us to know exactly what Joseph Smith said in 1834 as he reflected on the ruins his group encountered in Illinois.

[FAIRMormon's website](#) states:

It should be noted, however, that the History of the Church version was created by amalgamating the journal entries of several people.

- All of the accounts were published after the death of Joseph Smith
- The text has a convoluted history
- But keep in mind that even in the Book of Mormon, groups such as the Mulekites and the people of Ammon joined the Nephite Nation over time and were called by the name Nephite, only because they had given their allegiance to that faction politically. This had nothing to do with ancestry in a great many cases. Therefore, Joseph Smith's use of the word here doesn't necessarily imply ancestry of the peoples in the area.

This statement probably most clearly sums up FAIR's position:

If the history of the church were to be revised today using modern historical standards, readers would be informed that Joseph Smith wrote nothing about the discovery of Zelph, and that the account of uncovering the skeleton in Pike County is based on the diaries of seven members of Zion's Camp, some of which were written long after the event took place. We would be assured that the members of Zion's Camp dug up a skeleton near the Illinois River in early June 1834. Equally sure is that Joseph Smith made statements about the deceased person and his historical setting. We would learn that it is unclear which statements attributed to him derived from his vision, as opposed to being implied or surmised either by him or by others. Nothing in the diaries suggests that the mound itself was discovered by revelation.

Standard of Evidence

So let's hold that standard of evidence against other Church situations and see how they shake out. Anything that doesn't have the prophet's own written letter, 6 or so church members giving details, testable verifiable data points with evidence and anywhere the details conflict between accounts we remove those details to make the story generic:

- **First Vision** – Nope. No second witness, and was recorded years after the fact with conflicting accounts. Interestingly the RLDS church has basically done this reducing it down to "Joseph had a spiritual experience like those that were common at the time" (Source, video at the CoC Temple visitor area)
- **Angel Moroni** – Nope. [His mother gave the angel's name as Nephi, and so did the Times and Seasons](#). All we can say is "members claimed an angel appeared" and point out the accounts were conflicting and written after the fact.
- **Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood** – Only two accounts and both were in 1835; 6 years after the event. For a god that states that in the mouths of two or three witnesses He will establish truth, he's pretty light on the actual witness bit.
- **Testimony of the 8 witnesses** – Conflicting accounts, no; but we only have one document and its in Oliver Cowdery's handwriting. Better just say "Some witnesses were said to have claimed..." to keep up with FAIR's standard here. I mean a lack of evidence...
- **Polygamy** – Revelations are all in secret, conflicting accounts as to whom could marry, and how many. Angel with a drawn sword only told long after Joseph's death. Best to just say "Joseph married a lot of women and some members even claim he had revelation to do so
- **Word of Wisdom** – David Whitmer provides a conflicting account, we don't have 6 or more contemporary accounts of what was said. Best to say "Joseph gave health suggestions" and leave it there, right?

- **Temple Endowment** – Was never written down until after Joseph Smith was dead. We have conflicting accounts on what was said/done; and things were changed after the fact. Best just to say "Joseph had secret rituals"
- **Brigham Young's Transformation sequence** – Not even close. Months after, not a single contemporary account.
- **Miracle of the Seagulls** – Conflicting accounts. Story alters after the fact. Lack of Evidence.
- **First Manifesto** – So many conflicting accounts. It's no wonder they just ignored this one. I mean, Zelph's standard of evidence would mean they shouldn't hear any of it.
- **Word of Wisdom** required for temple attendance. Have you ever seen a contemporary account? How about evidence?
- **1978 revelation about blacks**. No contemporary account of the revelation exists. I mean, there are some minor conflicting accounts by people who were there, but no one actually wrote down the revelation. The second manifesto just states that a revelation occurred.
- **Masturbation** as a sin wasn't written down until 1956, there is no contemporary evidence of a revelation and overall the concept would be rejected in its entirety by this standard
- All in all, the restoration looks very differently if we hold to a Zelph standard of evidence doesn't it?

What things should members accept, that they don't currently, with a Zelph standard of evidence?

- There are things in the history that history exists, with multiple accounts that don't conflict for which we have evidence that are whole-cloth rejected/ignored by Sunday School lessons and Apologists alike.
- **Joseph was a treasure hunter** – Multiple accounts, Joseph talked about it himself, contemporary evidence. This has only recently been accepted by the church, with October 2015 (ensign article featuring the seerstone) being the first moment the seerstone and treasure hunting was really accepted
- **The Spaulding-Rigdon Theory** – With 20+ eye witnesses, some contemporary accounts and wordprint analysis (albeit weak) this should be taught every Sunday with Zelph as a standard of Evidence.
- **Brigham Young was a racist** – Years of evidence, and the current essay stating it was all just his opinions; Brigham's own words and the contemporary records should make this an open-and-shut case.
- [Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger happened years before the revelation on plural marriage](#)

What beliefs should be held if Zelph were legitimate?

- Members should not need a limited geography theory. Nephites and Lamanites both, with their battles stretched from the Rockies to Joseph Smith's home town. We should give credibility to all of Joseph Smith's visions and statements about the Nephites and totally reject the limited geography theory... and the essay.
- Skin color alters by righteousness. He was a "white Lamanite". This supports scripture; but rejects science.
- There was a final battle. That final battle resulted in more deaths than both sides on the civil war. This means that supply lines, weapons, skeletons etc. should be easy to find to validate this premise. I mean, they barely needed to dig to find Zelph. And we know that a major battle was around him; so finding out what a Cemetery should be a walk in a park.
- Something not frequently mentioned... someone had to bury Zelph. We know the Lamanites win that battle, so maybe for all their horrible nature they still buried dead Nephites with respect?

So why doesn't FAIR accept Zelph?

- List of papers that would need to be rejected if hemispheric model were accepted:
- John E. Clark, "Searching for Book of Mormon Lands in Middle America (Review of: Sacred Sites: Searching for Book of Mormon Lands)," FARMS Review 16/2 (2004): 1–54
- http://en.fairmormon.org/Source:John_Sorenson:Ensign:1984:the_immediate_land_covered_by_the_book%E2%80%99s_events_was_probably_only_hundreds_rather_than_thousands_of_miles_long_and_wide
- http://en.fairmormon.org/Book_of_Mormon/Anachronisms/Three_days_of_darkness
- Russell H. Ball, "An Hypothesis concerning the Three Days of Darkness among the Nephites," Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 2/1 (1993): 107–123.
- "Book of Mormon Geophysics," mormonmatters.org (28 August 2010)
- Benjamin R. Jordan, "Volcanic Destruction in the Book of Mormon: Possible Evidence from Ice Cores," Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 12/1 (2003): 78–87.
- John L. Sorenson, "An Evaluation of the Smithsonian Institution 'Statement Regarding the Book of Mormon'" (lightplanet.com)
- Stewart W. Brewer, "The History of an Idea: The Scene on Stela 5 from Izapa, Mexico, as a Representation of Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life," Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 8/1 (1999): 12–21
- John E. Clark, "Archaeology and Cumorah Questions," Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 13/1 (2004): 144–151
- John E. Clark, "Looking for Artifacts at New York's Hill Cumorah," Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 14/2 (2005): 50–51
- Allen J. Christenson, "The Sacred Tree of the Ancient Maya," Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 6/1 (1997): 1–23
- Brant Gardner, "The Other Stuff: Reading the Book of Mormon for Cultural Information (Review of: Nephite Culture and Society: Selected Papers)," FARMS Review of Books 13/2 (2001): 21–52.
- William J. Hamblin, "Basic Methodological Problems with the Anti-Mormon Approach to the Geography and Archaeology of the Book of Mormon," Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 2/1 (1993): 161–197
- Matthew Roper, "Swords and "Cimeters" in the Book of Mormon," Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 8/1 (1999): 34–43.
- Cherry B. Silver, "Connecting the Nephite Story to Mesoamerican Research (Review of: Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life)," FARMS Review of Books 12/1 (2000): 23–34
- Diane E. Wirth, "Quetzalcoatl, the Maya Maize God, and Jesus Christ," Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 11/1 (2002): 4–15

And many, many more...

What you see above is about 2-4 decades of the very basic research that got the organizations their credibility. They are foundation concepts behind the Journal of Mormon Studies; upon which FAIRMormon and the Maxwell Institute are based. This is all they have. If they created a standard of evidence and held to it, either they would need to include Zelph as a data point and all their foundation research is wrong.

Conclusion

The fact that Zelph is disprovable by science (DNA from bones buried at Pike County, Naples #8 mound should verify DNA mutation and ancestry) demands that apologists and believers must shift the goal posts when considering Zelph. The standard of evidence that is so rigorous for Zelph is ignored for key stories of

"the restoration". Zelph is the keg of dynamite underneath all of the apologist research that the modern LDS church relies on. To admit the story is to reject their own narrative, but they can't admit that Joseph just made shit up whenever people felt bad or started to doubt him; so instead they shift the goal posts knowing full well what they are doing.

When an honest man encounters evidence he is wrong, he will either stop holding his prior beliefs, or he will stop being honest. Zelph is all the evidence you need that the apologists and probably the prophets and apostles are dishonest, sacrificing their integrity to maintain false belief.

And that's why we end on Zelph.

Shoutout to the excellent podcast [Zelph on the Shelf](#) who cover many of the same issues I have with their own take on the topics.

[Medical Standards of Evidence](#), note; we wouldn't want them shifting these standards to follow the beliefs of pseudoscience, right?

The Standard of Proof has been erected.

No unlearned hand can stop the work from progressing

Apologists may rage, members may combine, apostles may assemble, columnists may defame,

But the truth of science will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent,

Visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every member's ear;

Till the every man, woman and child will have to reject evidence such as Zelph to continue to believe

And the exmormons can look upon the shrunken visage of a cult and think "the work is done".

ABC's of Science and Exmormonism – B is for Brass EXTRA CREDIT! Evaluating the apologetics.

User [/u/r48v9eiJhjE93YKOsaC9](#) responded to my ABC's B is for Brass with an apologist website, and I'm always happy to have my beliefs challenged. Maybe I'm wrong. So let's splice out and evaluate the apologetics on the issue of the Brass Plates.

Our Website:

<http://www.evidencesofmormon.org/evidences/brass-plates-of-laban.aspx>

First thing we notice is this [image](#), the text says that they found Brass or other metals that were engraved near the time of the invasion of Babylon with a green "Strong Plausible".

And finding brass that was engraved would make this plausible... but there are other aspects. The website does not address in any way that the 5 books of Moses were not assembled into one tomb, scroll or unit by this point at all. So I think the "Strong" part of "Strong plausible" is actually weak. They need to prove more than just "People wrote on metal".

But first I want to talk about using "Green" for "Plausible". Would you use Green as an indicator for plausible? For example, let's say a website critical of the church used green for plausible under "Joseph Smith is a rapist". I mean, it's plausible... would FAIR agree that green should be used?

How about for "Joseph Smith was a criminal"? That's even confirmed.

How about for "Joseph Smith III is plausibly the correct successor for the church" should that be green? I think it should have a "Yellow" indicator for caution. Just like with Claiming Joseph had sex with Helen Mar Kimball, we really don't have proof of that claim, and the outcome is plausible. But we should think of it as more of a "proceed with caution" rather than a green-lit concept, so too, the LDS person when finding some scrap of metal with writing on it in 500 B.C. should be cautious with claiming that the Brass plates are plausible.

But that's not where the problems end, no. Not by a long shot.

Quotable Summary

Under the quotable Summary, they list their own website as a source. I'm not sure why they do this on the page. Maybe it's an old SEO tactic. But regardless, having it prominently at the top, and listing themselves as the only source does kinda make it look like they are claiming this article as a source for this article. I HOPE it's an SEO tactic and not blatant dishonesty.

Now the actual Claim:

In 1979, two silver scrolls were found in Jerusalem that date to the time just prior to the invasion of Babylon. These small silver scrolls contain the engraving of what appears to be a prayer, including the name YHWH (Jehovah).

This is it. This is the evidence they give that Brass Plates are plausible.

In my ABC's of Science and Exmormonism, I go over that "Brass wasn't a thing" and that only Biblical scholars disagree. That it was most likely copper-heavy bronze. Writing on Brass is tough. Go home and write on one

of your brass door knobs if you don't believe me. It was the titanium of the day (and it was mostly bronze, most likely anyway).

Writing on a softer metal doesn't prove you can write on a harder one in the same technology time period. But let's investigate the claim that they found 2 silver scrolls.

In 1947, the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered, and with them was a scroll made of copper, which was engraved with additional archive locations. At this time the criticism evolved due to the wide coverage of the find. For the majority, the new criticism was that this was a metal scroll and not a metal plate, and that it was dated at a later time than 600 BC as made by the claim.

Okay so they wrote maps on copper. And later. That was established. It's legit. People did write on metal. Small amounts. Drew maps. Precious things.

It's not that nobody had found ancient metal plates before this; it was that the Dead Sea Scrolls were so widely published by the media that they became a well known name

Sure, there were other writings. But there is a difference between writing a shopping list and writing the bible. I could probably bang out "milk" and "eggs" on diamond with today's technology; but no one would. One would reserve precious and rare metal for important information. Brass Plates with books of moses on them... well as I said, this would be the most valuable find in all of history; so yes, it would make sense if it was in metal. I'll give them that.

There have been other discoveries before and after which have confirmed that records have been recorded on metal. The earliest archeological discovery of these artifacts that I am currently aware of was in 1860.

Cite your sources. CITE YOUR SOURCES! CITE YOUR SOURCES. The source is of course... an [LDS magazine](#). This magazine, in typical form does not cite it's sources. Its source is none other than apologist extraordinaire Hugh Nibley. In his book "Since Cumorah" on page 251 he makes this claim. But this isn't enough, as Hugh Nibley said about Fawn Brodie, we must check our sources of sources, mustn't we?

Hugh baby gets his source from [E.S. Roberts "an introduction into greek epigraphy part I the archaic inscriptions and the greek alphabet cambridge university press 1887 p 197](#). Yes with the magic of the internet, what was only known to dusty tombs inside University Libraries to those who would wear the maester's chains in Westeros, can be instantly available to even a boy who worketh the plow. Read it.

No go on. First paragraph. Read it.

"A **Marble** Stele sent by Fauvel to Choiseul" That's the page Nibley cites, of the book he cites. Well he cites the next page over. page 192, but that's just characters. No lead plates at all. Maybe Nibley's memory was weak and he cited the wrong page. Let's search the document for "leaden".

On [Page 96 it does discuss that leaden plates were used to work with oracles](#) And page 561 does mention Leaden plates found in Boeotia, Cnidos citing page 520 in the text. [Let's turn there](#)

The person imprecating the curse binds with a nail the folded leaden plate...

Wait, this is a metal piece used to curse people? This is the source that they are using as "writing on metal plates was found in 1860"?! Metal alchemic curse plates on the wrong page in the original source. No

WONDER they don't cite sources, eh? Ah, Nibley, you hid so much by your secret access to tomes unknown to the world. But this is deceptive. You could and should have done better.

Absence of Evidence proves the Book of Mormon

It turns out that finding ancient metals is actually a rather difficult task in Jerusalem. The problem is not in that the materials didn't exist, but the problem is that the materials were made of metal, and therefore valuable.

[Citation needed]

Let me help you. [Metal Stamps existed in Babylon](#) and we know how they were produced, and have evidence of them even if many were reworked.

And nowhere in the siege of Babylon does it mention Babylon destroying Jewish texts. They destroyed the city wall and the temple, but the concept of hunting down all scripture and destroying it is a Lamanite/Nephite dynamic. To LDS and former Mormons it probably goes unnoticed to claim that all the metal was melted down and re-used just a Sunday School level nod of "oh yeah, that happens". But in reality that kind of destruction is pretty unique to the Mayan/Aztec in that they had huge amounts of Gold and the Spaniards were there specifically for gold (Which Joseph Smith would have been aware of, so writing in gold prior to 1860 isn't as farfetched... I mean come on; the Spanish gold would have been part of the Captain Kidd raiding stories he loved to read and tell).

In fact we have plenty of record of the Babylon captivity from the captives and the captors. None of them mention mass acquisition of metal writing. So... [CITATION NEEDED]. But...

The citation they do give is of the destruction of the temple in the bible; which is recorded by everyone, but destroying a building filled with gold, brass/bronze and valuables shouldn't be assumed that they destroyed every record. They went for the store-house of value, like looting a bank. Could some metal deeds have been carried off? Sure. But the idea that there was tons of writing; but we just lost all of it needs to be substantiated with more than a verse from the bible about taking pillars and bowls or door knobs made out of brass.

The Meat of it. The Silver Scrolls

In 1979 and 1980, the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University, with help of other organizations, began to excavate a series of burial caves that were hewn in the seventh century BC. Here, under one of the burial benches in the cave, was discovered a set of rolled silver scrolls

This is a remarkable thing. This matters. Let's investigate. It actually has a citation that isn't scripture or an LDS source!

[Gabriel Barkay, News from the Field: The Divine Name Found in Jerusalem, Biblical Archeological Review, Mar/Apr 1983, accessed 05/03/2012](#)

Once again the magic of the internet let's see the hidden and lost articles that otherwise we'd have to take for granted. What does it actually say?

Dating to the end of the seventh or sixth century B.C., the prayer-like inscription containing the Divine Name was scratched on a tiny amulet—a rolled-up strip of silver.

Ho ho, one strip of silver with the name YWEH on it. I mean, don't get me wrong, that's monumental. That's huge. That's more than we've ever had before. ONE strip of silver with a name of Jehovah on it. Yeah, that one strip of silver with a name on it is the basis for believing that:

- The five books of Moses were assembled at least a century earlier than ever before
- That compilations were books, not scrolls as every other writing in the day and age is written on scrolls
- That Brass was a legitimate metal
- That people could inscribe on bronze or Brass 300-400 years prior to when the technology was invented (just like George Washington could drive to Lexington in his Prius, because 300 years of Technology is more than that scope of difference)
- That this record of immense wealth and rarity would be stolen from the ruling class of Jerusalem with nary a mention

Note: the picture on the website IS NOT The picture from the source website/ document they list. This is deceptive

Note: There was only one silver scroll, yet read the claim above, they specifically list TWO scrolls. I'm guessing that one of them was found a fraud and they only partially updated their website, because ya know; accuracy only matters so much when you are trying to deceive people about history

There is also additional evidence of metal engraving being done even earlier than this in Israel. In 1999, three bronze arrowheads were brought to light that had been previously discovered. These arrowheads date to 1000 BC and have the name of their owner inscribed onto them

Before I delve into this claim I want to point out that engraving something is not the same as engraving something else. Engraving your name in a Styrofoam cup isn't that hard. Engraving your name in your glass Pyrex dish used to serve funeral potatoes at the ward party takes acid or high-technology drills; and that's just glass. Engraving into gold takes a bit more. Engraving into the hardest substance known to man at the time is exponentially harder than engraving into common materials.

Arrowheads do NOT equal Brass.

<http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=25&Issue=3&ArticleID=13>

So first of all, this is all behind a pay wall for a biblical history site. Think about that. Not one source for this entire website is actually peer reviewed and scholarly. NOT ONE.

Yet this guy is cited in BYU papers: <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/P. Kyle McCarter, Jr.> in [key indexes at BYU](#).

In the [journal of Mormon Studies](#).

On apologist websites ([this one we're discussing](#))

And pretty much no where else. Go ahead, google him. This guy's website only had notoriety among Mormons. None of his findings are cross checked by actual historians at Universities. He isn't cited by other journals as having changed the entire landscape of how we think about history.

Nope. He's just a bible guy who collects things and publishes how this confirms the bible, but a UNIVERSITY accepts his credentials immediately without question, because it confirms Mormon belief

Conclusion

The website doesn't address most of the concerns about the Brass Plates. It doesn't address writing on Brass. It doesn't go into that Brass wasn't a thing back then, and it should be bronze. It doesn't address the size of writing on metal required to write Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy on metal. It doesn't address the weight of such a book (imagine Nephi trying to carry those four books in paper... it's heavy. Now imagine that they were on individual papyrus like scrolls. Awkward, and heavy with metal rollers to hold them. Now make the whole thing out of brass... 394 or so pages in English. Yup). It doesn't address the value of such a book, and the lack of any record of any sort of historical creation of such a precious thing. It doesn't address the difficulty in engraving the hardest substance known to man at that time.

Yet it gives it a "strong plausible" because YWEH was found on an amulet written in silver.

If this is your standard of "Strong Plausible" I have a bridge to sell you. Similar claims about Mormonism should be given a stronger plausible ([Joseph Smith fooled people by using a bag of sand and bragged about it has an eye witness for example!](#) and it was technologically feasible at the time, so it must be a "Strong plausible", right?)

The apologists are scraping the bottom of the barrel because this issue is large, there is no good answer, and they know it. Hugh Nibley had to either misremember or intentionally deceive people to find evidence, and these false claims have echoed throughout Mormon literature giving people faith based on false hope. And it just takes a few minutes and google to see through the sham if you're willing to take the time. Once a man is confronted with evidence he is wrong, either he will correct his beliefs, or he will stop being honest. Apologists are dishonest. Don't trust them.

Alcohol in the Book of Mormon - An Impossibility, multiplied exceedingly

From my research:

Alcohol and Drunkenness is mentioned in several places in the Book of Mormon. How often?

Between Wine, Drunken (in context of alcohol), Drunkenness (in context of alcohol), Drink, Drank, Drunk (in context of alcohol): Over 50 times

I am working on breaking down the categories and having specific numbers and references, though it gets a bit nebulous. Total references is around 100, but there are some challenges to categorization.

Challenges on Categorization:

1. Do we include mentions from the first two books of Nephi? My preference it to note them, but not include them as valid evidence, as Nephi would have been from a land that had alcohol and understood it.
2. Do we include sacrament wine? Again, I feel to have the strongest foundation it should be excluded, as it could be claimed to be word borrowing. No one gets drunk from it in the Book of Mormon.
3. Are references to being "Drunk with blood" valid? I believe yes, in a slightly separate category. You can't use a phrase like "drunk with..." in terms of being wild and crazy, unless you are making a comparison to someone who is drunk with alcohol.

Example Verses:

Mosiah 11:15 - 15 And it came to pass that he **planted vineyards** round about in the land; and he **built wine-presses**, and **made wine in abundance**; and therefore he became a wine-bibber, and also his people.

This is very specific: Not only is wine reference, but vineyards. Could that refer to any fermented alcoholic drink? Perhaps. But then... Noah built wine-presses. That is not used except in actual grape-wine.

Alma 55: 8-19 And when it was evening Laman went to the guards who were over the Nephites, and behold, they saw him coming and they hailed him; but he saith unto them: Fear not; behold, I am a Lamanite. Behold, we have escaped from the Nephites, and they sleep; and behold **we have taken of their wine and brought with us**. (This implies they have wine storage)

Now when the Lamanites heard these words they received him with joy; and they said unto him: **Give us of your wine, that we may drink; we are glad that ye have thus taken wine with you for we are weary**.

But Laman said unto them: Let us keep of our wine till we go against the Nephites to battle. But this saying only made them more desirous to drink of the wine;

For, said they: We are weary, therefore let us take of the wine, **and by and by we shall receive wine for our rations, which will strengthen us to go against the Nephites**.

And Laman said unto them: You may do according to your desires.

And it came to pass that they did take of the wine freely; and it was pleasant to their taste, therefore **they took of it more freely; and it was strong, having been prepared in its strength**.

And it came to pass they did drink and were merry, and by and by **they were all drunken.**

And now when Laman and his men **saw that they were all drunken, and were in a deep sleep,** they returned to Moroni and told him all the things that had happened.

And now this was according to the design of Moroni. And Moroni had prepared his men with weapons of war; **and he went to the city Gid, while the Lamanites were in a deep sleep and drunken,** and cast in weapons of war unto the prisoners, insomuch that they were all armed;

Yea, even to their women, and all those of their children, as many as were able to use a weapon of war, when Moroni had armed all those prisoners; and all those things were done in a profound silence.

But had they awakened the Lamanites, **behold they were drunken and the Nephites could have slain them.**

Mosiah 22: 6-10

Behold the back pass, through the back wall, on the back side of the city. **The Lamanites, or the guards of the Lamanites, by night are drunken;** therefore let us send a proclamation among all this people that they gather together their flocks and herds, that they may drive them into the wilderness by night.

And I will go according to thy command ** and pay the last tribute of wine to the Lamanites, and they will be drunken; **and we will pass through the secret pass on the left of their camp **when they are drunken and asleep.** ...

And king Limhi caused that his people should gather their flocks together; and **he sent the tribute of wine to the Lamanites; and he also sent more wine, as a present unto them; and they did drink freely of the wine which king Limhi did send unto them.**

I think these basic verses are enough to illustrate a few concepts:

1. Nephites produced alcohol in abundance. The Lamanites apparently did also
2. There was a method for long term storage. You can't pay tribute of wine unless it can be transported and stored.
3. The Lamanites liked to get drunk
4. They drink to the point of being so sound asleep that large groups can escape them. Keep in mind, that in the account in Mosiah, the Lamanites outnumber the people of Limhi in the area. Yet Limhi's people are all able to escape. Quietly. With their children and babies. And flocks. And supplies enough to wander in the wilderness for a bit.
5. They get drunk in groups and not a single one can hold their liquor.

Book of Mormon Quandary: No heavily concentrated alcohol existed in the Americas until the arrival of Europeans. Concentrated alcohol requires distillation, which did not exist in the Americas pre-Columbus.

Alcohol in the Americas Pre-Columbus: It is believed there were roughly 40 different alcoholic beverages across the entirety of the Americas. Of these varieties, none exceeded 8% alcohol content. That is like a low end wine. Whiskey, by comparison, is 60%. Many of those 40 varieties existed after the time of the Nephites.

The majority of these alcohols were only for ritual use, and several were after Book of Mormon times. Most were concentrated in the American South and Southwest, not in Central America or in the Heartlands areas. In Central America, the main (and just about only) alcoholic beverage was called Pulque. The alcohol content was low and it could be drunk all day and night and only generate a mellow feeling. It was high in calories. Pulque, like most alcohol of the time/area, would not last more than a day or two before going bad.

Other alcohols were hard to produce, such as the haren a pitahaya made from the flowers in the spring of the Saguaro cactus. It was seasonal, in low supply, and usually made only after the fruit had already been used for better purposes like jams.

Further, most alcohol's, being small in quantity, was reserved for religious ceremonies. Again, they spoiled fast, and so these rituals were typically tied to seasonal events like harvests, when it was available.

Alcohol and Deep Sleep / Passing Out: The amount of alcohol required for someone to pass out is extensive, and is very close to the level of alcohol poisoning. It is nearly impossible that a group of guards would drink that much, all of them at the same time, enough to not notice the people leaving en masse.

This appears to be play on the drunken Indian view of Native Americans common in the 1800's. The drunken Indian caricature is just that. It was not true. Native Americans do not have a genetic disposition to drunkenness, nor were they drunk all the time.

The Short of It, Alcohol is prevalent throughout the Book of Mormon. Regular people are regularly drunk. They store it. Soldiers get rations of it. They have a lot of it. It even plays a major role in several stories. It puts people to sleep they are so drunk. They don't even wake up for passing cattle and babies. It even works itself into their language's idioms.

But such concentrated alcohol did not exist in the Americas. Such volumes of low-grade alcohol did not exist. What existed could not be stored long term. Thus it could not be a tribute saved up and given at allotted times. It could not be in rations to soldiers. It could not get people drunk to the point of passing out. Simply put, it didn't exist. And if it didn't exist, then the stories it plays a major part in could not have happened. The escapes. The cultivation. The people. It's not a one or two time reference, it's throughout the Book of Mormon. And thus, the Book of Mormon is littered with impossibilities, even if it only touches the topic of alcohol.